

THOUGHTS

ON THE
PEACEABLE AND SPIRITUAL NATURE

H. Callender (A.) OF
CHRIST'S KINGDOM,

AND ON
THE CONDUCT OF HIS DISCIPLES IN TIMES OF REVOLUTION,
BLOODSHED, AND WAR.

WITH
OCCASIONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE FAITH OF CHRIST
AS OPPOSED TO
INFIDELITY AND POPERY.

By A FRIEND TO PEACE.

Adam Callender Esq^r —

Pray for Kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may

lead a quiet and peaceable life. 1 Tim. ii. 2.

Love your enemies. Matth. v.

If thine enemy hunger, feed him. Rom. xii.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

SCRIPTURAL SUBJECTION

TO

CIVIL GOVERNMENT,

IN AN EXHORTATION, ADDRESSED TO SUCH AS FEAR GOD.

By T. SHERATON.

Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.

LONDON:

SOLD BY J. MATHEWS, No. 18, STRAND; G. TERRY, No. 54, PATERNOSTER-ROW: AND T. HARDIE, No. 4, BOLSOVER-STREET,
OXFORD-STREET.

1794.

THE RIGHT

OF THE

PARLIAMENTARY

COMMISSION



SECRET FOR ALL SUBJECTION

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

IN AN EXHIBITION, NOT ADVERTISED TO BE AS SUCH

BY THE MUSEUM

THE BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON

LONDON

PRINTED BY THE MUSEUM

1854

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As the truths contained in your Exhortation appear to me of great importance to men in general, and particularly to all true christians, when I heard your thoughts on that subject, it struck my mind, that the same truths communicated to others might be of use. I am, therefore, to return you thanks for permitting me to make them public ; whilst, at the same time, I would embrace the opportunity of prefixing some thoughts of my own on a subject nearly allied to yours, and of equal importance ; hoping for men's candour and attention, and, 'above all, the blessing of God.

I remain,

In the bonds of the Gospel of Peace,

Ever yours,

ADAM CALLANDER.

...the ... of the ...
... to men in
... of the ...
... on the ...
... the ...
... of the ...
... of the ...

1 AU59

... I would ... the opportunity of pre-
... of my own on a subject
... and of great importance;
... and
... the ...

I remain

At the ... of the ...

Yours

ALAN CARLSON

THOUGHTS

ON THE

PEACEABLE NATURE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

READER, be assured, that these pages are not published with the smallest view to gather money, but to spread truth, and propagate peace—to lead men to God for true happiness, and to put christians in mind of what is their duty to the powers that be—that they may shew themselves the children of peace, by a quiet subjection to that form of government under which the divine Providence has placed them. If a kingly government, to honour the king;—if a republic, to obey that*. I am aware that the dif-

* Let it not here be thought, that the author believes all kinds of government equally good, as calculated to promote the happiness of men; by no means.—It would be an insult to common sense to say, that the government of a cruel despotic king, swaying the sceptre over the lives, and sporting with the liberties of his subjects, or that the usurped spiritual government of a priest at Rome, called the Pope, were at all to be compared with the happy and wise government of this country.

ferent contending parties about power, who kill one another, to gain little or nothing but the empty applause of their fellow mortals, will treat the conduct of true christians with scorn, and style them fools for merely keeping or observing the glorious laws of Jesus the prince of peace, which he has delivered to all his faithful subjects, to be obeyed, as a test of their love and subjection to him.

While nations and individuals are shedding blood, rising in arms, and whetting their swords in fierce zeal for power and different political opinions, even those who profess themselves to be the followers of the Prince of Peace, shew themselves to be no other than lovers of war and strife, vainly imagining that the glorious kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, can be enlarged or defended by their carnal weapons. Whence has all this come! but from leaving the simplicity which is in Christ, holding in common many things taught in the apostate church of Rome, who have shed the blood of thousands, because they would not bow down to their idolatrous worship? But, alas! Protestant professors, of the religion of Jesus, appear to be very ignorant of the nature of Christ's kingdom; and hence it is, that in speaking on political subjects, they are too commonly led to speak evil of dignities, or their lawful governors and magistrates. Their lust after power induces them to envy others that possess it, and their rebellious minds against civil authority, induces them to treat those with contempt whom God has com-

manded to be honoured and prayed for. It is too evident, that such characters do not fear God : and it is certain, that whatever zeal they manifest in reforming others, it should be applied in correcting their own errors. Those who profess to be the followers of Christ ought to see the necessity of falling under the influence of the grace of God, which, as the scriptures teach, leads those that believe it, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.—Surely that grace never reached the heart, when its greatest opposites appear in the life.

The great error of the day, even amongst true christians, is ignorance of the nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world. True christians are to appear a peaceable and quiet people, acting opposite to the maxims and sinful customs of this world ; to have one great end in view, which is, to attain that kingdom beyond death and the grave. As subjects of the Prince of Peace, they are to be conformed to his laws, to follow the Captain of Salvation ; and (if I may be allowed the expression) to put on his uniform, which is true holiness, meekness, and temperance.

This being seen, by the men of the world, a war is declared against the followers of Christ, more or less severe. The weapons the world uses are commonly reproach, contempt, scorn, evil names, and such like. Christians must endeavour, by God's
A 4 grace,

grace, to disarm their enemies, as Christ did, by faith, patience, and forgiveness, to lead their enemies to repentance and true peace. This, in the eyes of the nations of this world, is called meanness of spirit, needless singularity, methodism, and any name of reproach. But let christians think on him that said, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my sake; your faith will be ridiculed, and your practice derided." Yet christians, be courageous; in the grace of Christ be strong; never go over to the world again, but invite others to come to Jesus; to enlist under the Captain of Salvation, and take part with his despised people. Now, christian brethren, is the time to shew you love peace, and that you belong to Christ, and hope for a kingdom beyond death and the grave. Let the nations see you are the children of peace, that you respect the laws of your country, that you honour the king, obey magistrates; let none of us ever be found to disturb any government where our lot may be cast; for we find no command of Christ for his disciples to become keen politicians; but to be thankful that they have protection under our government, and therefore should pay taxes with cheerfulness.

As christians are to be quiet and contented with their lot, they dare not speak evil of dignities; far less join clubs, or take up arms to bring about revolutions; or hurt or take away any man's life, in such contentions about power.

It

It is contrary to the nature of Christ's religion, who came into this world to save, and we should follow his steps. It is also contrary to the nature of Christ's religion to join or take up arms, or that his disciples should seem to plot to bring about counter-revolutions. Blood-shedding and violence were foretold; but strictly forbid to Christ's disciples.—Nay we are commanded to forgive our enemies; and when persecuted in one place, to flee to another: shall we then disobey God, and join ourselves to armies of the nations of this world, who are cutting and destroying one another? No, christians! far otherwise does your Prince command you. Hear his words, and how he orders you to overcome your enemies. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink*." By this christian conduct you will heap coals of fire on his head, not to destroy him, but to melt him down with kindness; and thus imitate the compassion of God to you while an enemy. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children. Ephes. v. 1.

But against this the greatest numbers will object. Shall nations act thus? Impossible! Shall men of spirit sit down under affronts? It is foretold in scripture, that nation would rise against nation; that

* The nations of this world practise the very reverse of this; for if they find their enemies distressed for bread, they forbid all supplies, and are often found rejoicing at the misery of their fellow-creatures.

the

the men of the world would act and be influenced by the spirit of the world, and glory in destroying one another *. But let Christ's disciples consider, that they are called out of the nations to be a holy people, not to mix with the nations in their destructive wars and bloodshed; there is enough foretold who would war and fight, without Christ's disciples taking up the sword. Jesus has said, "My kingdom is not of this world; if it was of this world, then should my servants fight." John xviii. 36. Come out then from amongst them, my brethren. This is the command of Jesus, who forgave his enemies. 2 Cor. vi. 17. Did Jesus, his apostles, or followers, ever endeavour to raise an army? No; while its primitive beauty lasted, the disciples gloried in forgiving their enemies; and in being conformed to the Captain of their salvation made perfect through sufferings.

It has been objected to this scriptural account of the primitive christians, that their reasons for not raising an army, and contending for power, was rather owing to their weakness and want of number, than their aversion to become powerful by war. No;

* I enter not into the different political contests of nations. Therefore, let it once for all be remarked, that the author does not pretend to dictate to those in authority, relative to which are just or unjust wars on the principles of politics; leaving it to those whose business it is to investigate these subjects. He only maintains, with the apostle, That wars and fightings originate in the lusts of men. JAMES iv. 1, 2.

they

they understood too well their Master's command, and the nature and genius of his heavenly kingdom.

Hence we find, the peculiar laws of Christ were never intended for a nation of this world, but for his disciples, called in scripture, a Peculiar People, a Holy Nation, 1 Pet. ii. 9. separated from the nations in their tempers and conduct, and from all national churches, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. From such, says the apostle, "Turn away*." Thus christians are to obey the commands of Christ, both in a civil and religious way, by avoiding what is sinful, and living in peace, as strangers and pilgrims in this world, though accounted singular. Any government under which they live will have no cause to complain of them. And as they are forbid to take the sword, or take part in the bloody wars of the nations, consequently no government has reason to fear that mobs or revolutions can be brought about by the true and peaceable subjects of Christ's kingdom. Even under governments that are said to be usurped, and during fierce contentions about power, the christian has nothing to do to join in these disputes, but simply to obey those that

* There appears many of Christ's disciples members of national churches, who, though they allow, that there are many in these churches that only have a form of godliness, yet they hold communion with such, against the voice and word of God. Thus ignorant of the command of God, and instead of turning away, encourage the profane to go on.—Hear then, my brethren, the voice of God—"From such turn away."

hold the power ; to pray for the rulers, whoever they are ; and if they cannot live in peace under them, then they must retire *. Jesus, our blessed law-giver, has not informed us what is the best form of government ; but has strictly enjoined his disciples to disturb no government, but to pray for it, and live peaceably. If Paul was thankful for protection under the government of a wicked emperor, (and we do not find that disciple of Christ acting as a member of any political club) surely every true christian will be thankful for the mercies he enjoys under the British government. We find no perfect government on earth ; and men are ever ready to err ; kings and ministers, magistrates and others. They may even bring distress on a country by their iniquity, as history confirms. In this case a christian should pray for them, and pity them ; and (if he has any influence) to endeavour to lay the laws of God before them ; that they may repent before God, that the nation may be saved. How dreadful are the calamities now of a neighbouring nation, deluged in blood ! Sin and iniquity has brought down the judgments of God upon them. Every one that reads and meditates, must be convinced of the wickedness

* There are two parties now in France, each contending and murdering one another for power and dominion. Even under such melancholy circumstances, the peaceable christian must obey those who hold the reins of government ; such are the powers to him, that he dare not join to shed blood, either as a revolutionist or a counter-revolutionist. If, for his peaceable principles, both should hate him, it will be better to retire than retaliate.

and

and general corruption of that court; together with the clergy and people in general, now scattered, broken in pieces, and ruled by others, still more wicked, wholly given up to confusion and anarchy*. God has revealed in scripture, that punishment will succeed iniquity; that revolutions in kingdoms (the inevitable consequence of sin and corruption) would certainly take place. Mankind have dreadfully departed from God, and the corruption of the heart is clearly evinced by the streams that daily flow from that fountain. One individual blames another, the other retorts; but both are infected with the same disease. Hence the most severe and abusive language against our rulers and lawful authority.

It is not here inculcated, that such powers are perfect†; far from it. But that iniquity may not be our ruin, let each individual call to mind his own sins against the law of God, and turn to God the Lord by Jesus Christ; when he will then see more clearly how to cast the beam out of his neighbour's eye. Let christians consider the various mercies and advantages that we enjoy in having a fixed and settled government; and nothing shews more the ingratitude of the human heart, than our only coming to know the value of our mercies when they are no longer in

* In the midst of corruption, there is no doubt, in that kingdom, many good men groaning for deliverance.

† We are not called to flatter our superiors, or vindicate the crimes of any.—But no real christian can believe, that it is right to reform by violence, or reach conviction by abuse.

our possession. Few things are more evil than violent disputes; they often degenerate into hatred; and the case is still more alarming when the rulers of a nation are divided, and each followed by their respective parties. Thus commotions, civil war, and all its melancholy consequences.

This is one great reason why christians should pray for all that are in authority, that their counsels may be directed for our good, and that the kingdom of Christ may flourish and increase; that its converts may be many, called out from the nations; and evince that they are the subjects of the Prince of Peace, by beating their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and withdraw from the fierce and bloody contests of ambitious men.

Nothing has been more destructive to true christianity than the evil example set by the great Antichrist, the Church of Rome, in teaching its converts to use the sword; deluging the nations in blood. Ten thousand pages would not contain the catalogue of the murders, massacres, and devastations made by that monstrous Hierarchy.

I do not mean to tire the reader's patience by endeavouring to turn over those dreadful cruelties; but will only remark, that the general conduct of that church for some centuries, proves itself to have apostatized from the true, peaceable, and spiritual profession of the religion of Jesus. When their plans

plans of aggrandizement would not succeed by artifice and cunning, they immediately had recourse to the sword.—Kings and Princes have been the executioners of their sanguinary laws, to murder the servants of God. But through infinite mercy to the church, the nations now appear to hate the whore as much as they formerly loved her. Therefore, God is to be praised, who gave his witnesses strength, and glorified his name, in their boldly giving their lives for the truth, rather than submit to the idolatrous worship of that church.

The light of the glorious gospel, at the reformation, and since, has chased away much of the anti-christian darkness, and caused its votaries to skulk into dark corners, as the owls and bats before the light of the sun*. But, alas! there is yet much of the influence of that power, and much of its darkness remaining in protestant countries.

It is far from my intention in these few pages to endeavour to shew the many ways this has been done, by nations who are ignorant of the spiritual nature of christianity. But how dreadfully has this kingdom, and others, suffered by religious wars. Even the people of God have been drawn away to take up the sword, and kill their enemies, from ignorance of the nature of Christ's kingdom. But,

* See an excellent discourse on the fall of this Babylon, by Fleming.

says Jesus, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword;" remarkably fulfilled in so many perishing by that weapon. In this country, we have seen thousands; each party vainly supposing they fought in the cause of Christ:—witness the ignorance of such men, of the nature of Christ's kingdom, that finding no countenance for their bloody wars from Christ and his apostles, have had recourse to the Jewish state of things. But we see how Christ rebukes that spirit so natural to fallen man. When they wished fire to come down on those that opposed them, the meek and lowly Saviour plainly told them, "That they knew not what manner of spirit they were of." The Son of man is not come to destroy men, but to save.—Glorious religion!—How contrary do we find the conduct of men; not only the bloody church of Rome, but protestants, discovering the same spirit when they had the power*.

Hence we find men actuated by the same spirit, in the beginning of the civil wars in the reign of Charles, ignorant of the nature of Christ's kingdom, lifting the sword, and crying out, "To your tents, O Israel!" Thus quoting scripture, delighting in the Jewish economy (now done away), rather than follow the Prince of Peace, in a way of suffering,

* Queen Elizabeth, who had just escaped with life, the cruel hands of her persecutors, on account of religion, now in her turn persecutes others; instigated by her clergy, fines and drives out of her kingdom some of her most loyal and quiet subjects, only because their form of church government differed from hers.

glorying

glorying in their numbers, slaying their enemies, destroying one another, by every means hateful, and and hating one another. Each party declaring that they fought the battles of the Lord, and cutting one another's throats in his sacred name. But if we would hallow the name of God, we should do his will; and his will is as contrary to the conduct of such men as light is to darkness. Wherefore, oh! christian, come out from among them—hear the command of Christ—“Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you.” But the nations say, “We must fight for our liberties and privileges; it is our right.” But Christ says to his disciples, “Avenge not yourselves; if they take one garment (rather than destroy your enemy), give him the other also*.” “Impossible!” cry the men of the world; “must I turn so mean spirited, as to suffer an indignity? by no means.” “Impossible!” say those of the established church, “we cannot think of yielding any ancient privilege; we will rather perish with our sword in our hand.”—Many of the dissenters are also ready to fight. “And shall we,” say they, “not fight for our religion, &c. &c.”—Thus amidst the din of contention, the scriptures are not heard. But let not Christ's disciples mix with such men†.

* Thousands of professed christians endeavour to explain away these plain and important sayings of Christ.

† In large societies the prevailing temper will be resentment of affronts; still amongst them we find those that truly fear God.—Wherefore, come out from among them.

Whatever others may think, be assured your religion is in no danger : it is out of the reach of men. Your hope, when humbly trusting in God, can never be taken from you ; says the apostle, " Christ in you the " hope of glory."

We find, what are called christian nations, then, are not Christ's disciples : their actions and tempers contradict the name. How dreadful will it be at last, to behold thousands cast out from the presence of God, and the heathen rise up in judgment against such vain professors of the name of Christ. What is now highly extolled by men, is " abomination in the " sight of God." It appears, that the nations have only the form of christianity. Look at their mutual animosities, and bloody conquests. History is only a detail of evil. We find monuments erected to those that have been only famous for shedding blood. Alexander, called the Great, overrunning countries with fire and sword. A Charles the XIIth, of Sweden, never easy but when his sword returned full of blood, with thousands of his deluded followers, thanking God that he had power to destroy his fellow-creatures. See a Louis the XIVth, called the Grand Monarch, believing that Europe was only formed for him to conquer ; view this man in the height of what the world terms, Glory, giving ear to a wicked priest ; revoking the edict of Nantz, and causing his peaceable protestant subjects to be cruelly massacred, to render his name immortal *. These,

* Such men take the name of " Most Christian."

and

and such like, are the heroes of the world, with their deluded followers. Let it be your greatest honour, O christians, to follow Christ; you will never be deceived nor deluded; study his laws; revere and love his name and people; and know, that to overcome evil with good, is the most glorious of all victories, and truly beneficial to your fellow men. Besides, What is the honour that comes from the world? It is empty, and certainly perishing; and, as the world is corrupt, that which delights it must be of the same nature,

The men of the world and nations fight and destroy one another with fire and sword; individuals with barbarous revenge for the smallest affronts, blowing out one another's brains, called a gentleman-like spirit*. A difference in opinion often leads men to such dreadful lengths. Whence come wars and fightings, but from the lust of men; a thirst for power; often the ambition of princes, and at other times, the restless spirit of their subjects? All this springs from the root of iniquity in the heart. Men, ignorant of the spiritual nature of christianity, make their different opinions the one thing needful; and will give life and all to gain their ends.

But christians, be assured, "one thing is needful:" the Faith of Christ held fast, as our only hope in life and death. Zealous political disputes,

* This is accounted murder in the sight of God; and is rather the spirit of the devil.

and fighting, must be left to the men of the world. They prove their zeal by slaying one another. Let the disciples of Christ prove theirs, by contending earnestly for the truth, and the laws of Christ; with all long suffering, patience, and meekness, fleeing war and bloodshed. Should you be hated by men for your peaceable principles, remember Christ says, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are chosen out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

There ever will be an irreconcilable disagreement between christianity and the world. They think it strange, says the apostle, "that ye run not with them in the same way speaking evil of you." The christian could not keep the sabbath, mixed with an army, slaughtering their fellow-creatures. Instead of meeting in their peaceable assemblies to worship God, perhaps ordered on that day to destroy their fellow men; perhaps to point the destructive shell against the houses of poor helpless women and children, groaning at the same time beneath other woes. Flee then, O christian, these scenes*.—Let ambitious men fight; there is enough of them.—Let them seek their perishing glory.—Christ has foretold all this; and that his disciples would be but a remnant at any

* If Christ's disciples enter into the wars of the nations of this world, on both sides, they must of course destroy one another at the command of men. Thus disobeying Christ, who commands them to love all men, especially one another.

time. Come out then from them, lest, being partakers of their sins, you may partake of their punishments. You have many enemies to combat. Christians are called to be soldiers, though not to kill men, because of some encroachment on their liberties; yet to fight—for the great Captain of the christian armies has commanded them to use weapons; not to rise against kingdoms or republics, but against Satan, principalities, wicked spirits, against “the rulers of the darkness of this world: therefore, take the whole armour of God—the helmet of salvation—the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God—your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace—and above all, the shield of faith, to quench the fiery darts of the wicked*.”

Ephes. vi. My christian brethren, and beloved in the Lord, let me exhort you to be thus armed; those will perish by the hand of the enemy that undertake to fight without this armour. You, however, have the certain promise of victory in standing fast. Your eternal life depends upon it, through the power of Christ.

We hear of wars in the nations. Their political opinions are not to be compared to what the christian is called to fight for. Not to take a city, but to lay “hold on eternal life.” How different then is the

* These are glorious weapons—very different from those of the nations of this world.

kingdom of Christ, from the kingdoms of this world; how different its defence, and the armour, tempers, and conduct of its subjects. Men are invited to become subjects of this prince. Let the reader consider seriously its great importance. The world, and the business of it, will only leave you comfortless, if made your chief happiness. We are by nature sinners and ungodly in the sight of a pure and holy God. Though some are greater, others less; yet all condemned. No way of escape by obeying that holy law; the breaches of that law bring us all in guilty. Tears cannot wash away sin—Remorse will not pay debt—Alms-giving cannot purchase heaven.

Tears and remorse will accompany true repentance; and alms-giving will shew our compassion to others. But God has declared but one way by which we can receive a pardon, and be washed from our sins; every other dependance must be renounced, and as sinners, we must flee to the only refuge, the Lord Jesus Christ. In him is life and peace. “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

1 Tim.

Thus the mercy and grace of God appear, enlightening men to understand the true way of salvation. No one of mankind has the least occasion

to

to glory over another, because it is God that sheweth mercy.

The glory of the world is generally in what they have done. But the humble apostle said, "God forbade that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ." This is true christianity. Thus it is written, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God *." Rom. viii. This some would call enthusiasm, to be enlightened and led by the Spirit of God. But Christ declares, "none can call him Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." There cannot be a christian on earth, without the Spirit of God. None can understand the scriptures, savingly and truly, but by the holy Spirit—the spirit every true christian receives: it is proved to be the Spirit of God, in man, by leading the condemned sinner to the cross for life and salvation. The Spirit leads to true holiness—to purity of heart—to the love of God and man; in short, to all that is holy, just, and good. It is contrary to all revenge; being the Spirit of Christ, it will be discovered as a meek and quiet spirit in private and in public. By this shall all men see, that it is truth, and no enthusiasm. "By this," says Jesus, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Love is said to be the fulfilling of the law—love to God will lead us to obey

* In this day of clamour about religion, we find, that except we are led by the Spirit of God, we cannot be true christians.

him—love to our neighbour will lead us to serve him—love to enemies will lead us to forgive them*.

There will also be a peculiar love to all our fellow-disciples ; not only those we more immediately join with in our public assemblies, but wherever we discover any that are made partakers of the Spirit of Christ, to love them as members of that body of which Jesus is the head.

Being made the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus ; that is, all true believers, it must follow, since children of the same God and Father, that they are all brethren and sisters. They are called then to separate themselves, and have no communion in religious worship with Unbelievers, Deists, Atheists, Arians, and such like ; but also to separate from nominal professors of Christ's religion, described by the apostle, " having a form of godliness, but denying

* How opposite is this to the spirit of the world !—we can scarcely go into private company in this day of political zeal, but we hear wishes expressed of destruction to their enemies ; yet at church, such persons appear to pray devoutly, " that God would forgive them, and turn their hearts." Thus blessing and cursing proceed out of the same mouth. How unlike is this to the spirit of Christ ! When the christian hears of the acts of wicked and cruel men, the Spirit of Christ leads him to pity them, and pray for their conversion ; knowing that it is only by the mercy of God he lives, and that God suffered long with him while an enemy. The christian is taught to hear God's word ; that says, " Vengeance is mine." This doctrine of Christ takes not away the power of the civil magistrate to punish offenders.

" the

“the power; from such turn away.” The first christians separated themselves from the mixed multitude; both from unbelieving Jews and Gentiles; Acts xix. They were joined together in societies, called in scripture, “The churches of the saints.”—To obey Christ in all his laws—to love one another, which is the peculiar mark of Christ’s disciples—to hold thus a public testimony of the excellency and nature of the religion of Jesus: Nothing is more wanted in this day of loose-profession of Christ’s religion, than that true christians should separate from the nominal, in all religious communion. The command is plain. Those that disobey it, are building up and encouraging iniquity, instead of separating from such men*.

I am

* While we obey the command of Christ, to separate from the immoral and profane, some christians have run into the opposite extreme, and called it unlawful either to pray, or to sing the praises of God, with those whom they account true believers and saints; because they are not members of the same church or society in this world. Though christians should be of one mind in the faith and principal ordinances of Christ, in their particular assemblies; because they cannot have communion in an ordinance, if not agreed how that ordinance is to be observed; yet occasionally, real christians may have communion in ordinances in which they are agreed, though not all members of the exact same society on earth: because such fellowship is founded on their mutual relation to God, as his children; and to Christ, as their one Lord Redeemer. As the best christians only see in part, and are liable to err, this should encourage mutual forbearance and love, that while we avoid one extreme, we may not run into another. What is for the glory of God, and the good of men, will be found by avoiding

I am now to beg pardon for this digression; but as it appears important, that true christians should return to that primitive simplicity, simple faith, quiet and peaceable behaviour of the first believers, I can easily hope the importance of the subject will plead my excuse with every serious reader.

Let every individual lay it to heart, that they may break "off their sins by repentance, lest iniquity be our ruin." Is it in vain that God threatens nations and individuals? No; sin and corruption have come to a dreadful length in this country. Consider the holiness and purity of that God, against whom we rebel; almost every iniquity committed under Popish darkness, is now done under the name of Protestant and Reformed in this nation. But it is awful to think, that those who have had the clearest truth, and made light of it, will have the greater punishment. The case of the Jews, who strictly professed the true religion, were under that profession dreadfully overthrown; their city burnt with fire, on account of their wickedness, and given up to the sword of the enemy in all places.

View for a moment our own sins, infidelity, neglect of the Gospel of Christ, denying the Godhead

avoiding each extreme. Thus christians will shew that love and compassion for one another, that we find so conspicuous in Christ, who bore with the ignorance and prejudices of his true disciples, that we may follow his steps.

and

and Divinity of Christ; and thus, from this bitter root of infidelity and unbelief, all manner of immoralities grow and increase, from the higher to the lower ranks of men.

Hence a corruption of manners.—Sin becomes common, and, under the name of fashion, advances with bold steps and unblushing countenance, bringing with it a train of evils, until the long-suffering of God is no more, when the nations are given up to suffer the most dreadful calamities.—Men, brethren, and fathers, let me exhort you to lay these things to heart; be assured they are not illusions, or the dark dreams of melancholy; they are awful realities: sin and iniquity are the forerunners of judgment. Turn your eyes to a neighbouring kingdom. Not to puff ourselves up with a fond conceit of our moral rectitude, but to lead us to repentance. This is the true use to be made of the awful judgments of others. “For unless,” says Christ, “ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Luke xiii. I enter not into the fierce disputes of democrats and aristocrats. Let each one think of these words of Christ; and falling down in the presence of God, repent of their sins, and return to the Lord through Jesus, the certain refuge of the guilty.

But it is objected, “None will give ear to such advice. The great and lower ranks will still go on in their fashionable and accustomed iniquities.” An-

swer, It is too true. But, reader, hear the voice of God: "save yourselves from this corrupt generation *." Acts. ii. What if thousands should perish; it will but aggravate your sin, that you remained amongst them. Should a ship be quickly going to the bottom, and a certain way of escape is set before you, you must, without delay, "save yourself." Though hundreds, making light of salvation, or being intoxicated, go down and perish.

In men's different disputes on political subjects, I humbly hope each party means it for the good of the nation. But these warm contentions are of little avail while men are not reforming themselves. The great reform must begin at the heart †.

We have now hundreds of sermons, from various clergymen, filled with political discussion; all aiming at reform. Those that preach a peaceable subjection to our government and laws, do well. But their mutual feuds, by entering into political questions, only serve to stir up contention. Such men shew their political wisdom; and they would act with

* The power and blessing of all instruction is from God. But his long-suffering with us, his goodness and mercy, should lead us to repentance.

† If men really feared God, and were led by the Spirit of Christ, corruption would cease to be predominant.—The subjects "of Christ's kingdom must be circumcised in heart.—Marvel not, "when I say unto you, Ye must be born again." John iii.

more

more consistency, were they to change places with the Members of the House of Commons.

Amongst these legislators, such divines would then have an opportunity of descanting on the balance of power—the expediency or not of going to war—the necessity of a reform in Parliament; and such other questions. Such men would learn from able legislators how to discuss these questions. At present they appear half divines and half politicians. Thus, by endeavouring to act both characters, they are master of neither,

From such teachers, christians, we must turn away, whether churchmen or dissenters. If we wish to hear able political speakers, let us go to the House of Lords or Commons. God has appointed them. “The powers that be,” says the Apostle, “are ordained of God,” and to be honoured and revered by all Christians. But God never appointed such political clergymen*. They follow not Christ or his Apostles, but are more like the clergy of the Roman hierarchy, who, by taking part in the politics of nations, begun at last to war and fight, and mix Christ’s kingdom with the kingdoms of this world.

* Christ appointed his Gospel to be preached, to bring men to God. His true minister Paul, differed widely from such men, for he says, “I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” 1 Cor. ii. By this we shall know the ministers of Christ from the political clergyman.

Nay,

Nay, they have made it altogether a nation of this world. Instead of being the peaceable followers of Christ, they have taken the sword, and slain others. Even the order "to arms," has been given from pulpits. Ignorant men then thought it sanctified their rising against their governments, or authorised them to begin some crusade or cruel war.

But what can we expect from men covered outwardly with the clerical garb, if strangers to the Spirit of Christ? They have done more mischief to the world than those that profess to be guided by the light of nature, or, in other words, mere philosophers.

Every man, in the least acquainted with the history of Europe, must be convinced of this truth. Much blood has been shed in the world through the lusts of men; but none attended with more cruelty than that shed at the instigation of wicked priests. A proof this, that a corrupt profession of christianity is worse in its effects than paganism.

What dreadful massacres lately in France, instigated by several of their leaders, who appear both cruel and bloody! This is said to arise from the French casting off their religion; and it is certainly true, for all the wickedness that has ever been in the world, comes from nations casting off religion, and not having the fear of God before their eyes. But let us take a view of them in their religious character, or rather corrupted christianity; when at
the

the instigation of many of their religious leaders, they massacred in one night thirty thousand men, women, and children, in Paris alone, and as many more in the provinces, only because these poor people were protestants. His holiness the Pope sung a solemn Te Deum, that God had assisted him to butcher his fellow-creatures,—Rome heathen never got so far in wickedness,

Political enthusiasm, and religious enthusiasm, both lead to cruelty; when men cast off all fear of God, and come into power by shedding blood, God will avenge that blood, as the history of nations shews us; and dreadful will be the end of such political rulers, except they repent. The scriptures also solemnly declare, that God will avenge the blood of his saints shed by wicked priests, and scatter and break in pieces the church of Rome*; see Rev. xvii. The kingdom of Christ, and his peaceable subjects,

* In large bodies of men we must always do justice, and except the more moderate and humane from the most violent and cruel — Since writing page 13th, I have heard with pleasure, that several of those rulers proposed to grant toleration to the poor protestants, and the people of God, that are scattered in France. Though there are many humane men of the catholic religion, yet the great body of the Romish clergy, and their followers, would not tolerate these poor people, or permit them to worship God, by building convenient places for that purpose.

Thus the intolerant spirit of the Pope's church against the protestants, God will visit with judgments.—See Rev. chap. xvii. and xviii.

stand

stand opposed to all this error and cruelty, with truth and patience. Thus human nature is the same (if not renewed by the holy Spirit of God), whether it puts on a political or religious face.

Oh ! my christian brethren, how needful is it to live like the subjects of the Prince of Peace.—This is an evil day.—We have already proved, that the fear of God will lead you to honour the king, to obey magistrates, and to respect the laws of your country ; to have no fellowship or part in fierce political disputes ; to flee from those that would promote revolutions in kingdoms or states of this world, and from all counter-revolutionists.—Take up no sword to destroy men about such questions *. You, christians,

* It is objected, would you thus banish the sword altogether ? No !—The civil magistrate is appointed, and is said, “ not to bear the sword in vain.”—But it is contrary to the whole nature and spirit of Christ’s religion, for his disciples to take the sword to slay men in the bloody wars of nations.

It is objected, “ that this peaceable doctrine hurts the martial spirit of a nation.” Whatever may be in this, Christ’s commands to love and forgive our enemies, must be obeyed by his disciples, and to beat their swords into plough-shares, and revenge no injuries, are the fruits of the Spirit of God. A few despised people, teaching these peaceable doctrines of Christ’s kingdom, cannot hurt others.

It is objected by some religious people, “ can we suffer our liberties and religion to be destroyed, and not take arms ? Answer : Christ’s kingdom does not want your swords. The various sects of christians in the time of Cromwell appeared ignorant of the nature

Christians, will be able to do more good, by endeavouring to be peace-makers; for Christ says, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." Therefore, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." Col.*

The world has always persecuted the followers of Christ, more or less. There has been a continual war kept up from the beginning; and it will never cease while the world stands. Therefore, says Christ, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, but rather division—two against three, and three against two—the father against the son, and the son against the father." Luke xii.

Thus Jesus has foretold what would be the consequence of his doctrine being received and believed—the world would commence war—they have done it. Witness the persecution raised by the Jews against

nature of Christ's kingdom; they knew better how to fight than suffer (the Quakers excepted); and thus became a nation of this world defended by the sword. True Christians were among them, but very ignorant of the weapons that Christ has appointed for defending his cause.

If the nations as such really received the Spirit of Christ, there could be no more war. The voice in the scriptures to the nations is, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, that ye may receive pardon of your sins," and become the followers of Christ.

* In the liturgy of the church they pray, "that God would give peace in our time." This is truly a Christian prayer.

Jesus, and his harmless followers. Christ was to them a stumbling-block ; they were told, that their own works or righteousness could not save them. Thus a war begun, and Christ's words verified, that those that believed would be persecuted. Witness for a moment, the dreadful war commenced by the heathen against the harmless followers of Jesus.

The philosophers of Greece and Rome were much offended, and their pride raised, to hear the Apostles declare, that " all their wisdom, even in its highest state of cultivation, could never lead them to God ;" and that " the world by wisdom knew not God ;" that their most refined systems of morality and religion (which tolerated idolatry, and other evils) could never stand before God ; that they were sinners, and did not know the true God, (Acts ii. 38) ; and that they must be saved by that Man that was despised, and at last crucified at Jerusalem.

In short, for such sayings these philosophers have taken an affront, and all their modern adherents : and as their religion tolerates resentment and war, they have never made up the quarrel ; and Christ's disciples can never ask their pardon, or leave off declaring, that " Men are all guilty before God ;" that they are ungodly ; " that their wisdom is foolishness with God ;" and that their works cannot save them ; but that they can only be saved by that work

work wrought by Christ, when he bowed his head on the accursed tree, and said, "It is finished."

The followers of Christ dare not resent injuries; but we invite the philosopher and deist to come and partake of rich blessings, a feast; to partake of mercy, flowing freely through Jesus Christ; to leave a perishing world, for one that will endure, when time shall be no more. Surely they must be ill-bred that can be affronted at such invitations.—Yet, reader, such is the case.—When we tell the modern self-righteous, that they must be saved by the same mercy that saved the poor thief on the cross, they directly exclaim, "Are we as bad as common thieves!" With such I shall not dispute: and I accuse none of taking their neighbour's goods, or stealing. But God says, we are all condemned, and brought in guilty by his holy law. Rom. iii. Nay, we may be decent people, and good neighbours; and before men perhaps appear in many respects amiable; yet be accounted robbers in the sight of God.—How many are there mixing their works with the faith of Christ in order to get to heaven? This is robbing God our Saviour of his glory: "For whosoever entereth not by the door, the same is a thief and a robber." John x.—Alas! how often do we find men prosecuting, on account of some of their money taken from them, and getting their fellow-men put to death; when at the same time they daily rob God, and take his name in vain? Certainly they

would lament bitterly if a holy God dealt with them as they do with their fellow-creatures.

The religion of Jesus teaches us to treat others with compassion, from a sense of the love of God to ourselves. It will lead us rather to suffer than return injuries.—The apostle says, “Render to no man evil for evil.”

After what Jesus has said, can we wonder that his disciples should be often evil spoken of, and persecuted*? But they are not on that account to war and fight, like the nations.—Says the apostle, “Being defamed, we intreat. Being persecuted, we suffer it †.”

No nation of this world will act upon these principles; and we may as well endeavour to reconcile Christ with Antichrist, or light with darkness, as reconcile the revengeful spirit of nations, their frauds, ways, bloodshed, and slaughter, with the spirit of Jesus, or his sermon on the mount.

* “I send you forth as sheep,” says Jesus, “among wolves.” The men of the world are compared to wolves, if they persecute christians.—They act from an evil spirit. Jesus’s disciples are called sheep; and wolves will destroy from their nature: but it would be against nature as well as scripture to see the sheep devour the wolves.

† Some modern professors call this a timid spirit; and, if oppressed, or their civil or religious liberties encroached on, are ready to take up the sword.

Thus

Thus the world and its spirit are hostile to the laws of Christ. The gospel, and its heavenly precepts, must not give way to the vain thoughts of men. Men must throw aside their pride, and must come as guilty before God; then receive and practise the laws of Christ, though accounted fools by the world. Some men would endeavour to dress Christianity after the taste, modes, and fashions, of the polite part of the world; perhaps that they might fall in love with it. But we may easily see, that those truths of the gospel, so much despised by the world in all ages, will not now become palatable or fashionable. They will only be truly welcome to the self-condemned sinner; and none other will seek for this salvation. The gospel will never be welcome to those that make their alms-deeds something meritorious in the sight of God.

The merits of Jesus alone can save a sinner, who trusts in him for salvation. In short, the philosopher, the self-righteous, and careless sinner, will always account the cross of Christ foolishness. They trust to their little duties, their alms deeds, and other things; when God has said, that none can come to him, or be justified in his sight, but through Jesus; or ever have the pardon of their sins but by the blood of his cross. The modern philosopher fancies himself good, though a holy God has said, that all that have sinned are under the curse of God's holy law—Gal. iii. In this day of debate about religion; and

of infidel men casting off their religion; though, on inquiry, we find it to be only numbers of deists casting off the idolatry and superstition of the pope, and now turning more open deists and infidels *. Others, under the Protestant name, departing from the true principles of protestants, viz. justification by faith in the atonement of Christ; thus casting off the only way of salvation and true holiness, to the eternal ruin of their souls, as much as the open infidel. How important is it, reader, amidst so much error, to know what is true religion, as it stands opposed to false religion. How we shall appear before the tribunal of God, is a most important question; indeed all questions are comparatively of little importance to this; the affairs of nations, political debates, and such things of the world, sink into nothing before this all-important truth, "the judgment to come." "Narrow is the way that leads to life," says Jesus, "and few there be that find it. But broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many go that way." Christians are often called mad for seriously thinking and trembling

* It is now said, that infidel men have banished God from his temples of worship, but this is great ignorance; God dwelleth not in temples made with hands; and these buildings in France, which many Protestants now call temples of God, in place of this were only the temples of idols, an abomination in the sight of God; and a holy God has given them into the hands of wicked men to spoil and destroy. The temples God now inhabits are not ponderous buildings; but God, by the mouth of his apostle, declares, that the bodies of Christ's disciples are "the temples of the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor.

at these words ; but, truly, men are not appearing in their right mind, while they disregard the word of God ; indeed the scriptures term them fools, while they continue unbelievers.

The book of God contains a full account of the nature of true religion. From these infallible oracles we learn, that the state of man is naturally a state of guilt and misery, from which he could not deliver himself ; that, moved by divine compassion, God was pleased to reveal his mercy by the incarnation and suffering of his own son ; that Jesus of Nazareth, the true Messiah, bare our sins in his own body on the tree ; that it is the gracious settlement of Heaven, that whosoever receives the gospel record, as a true and faithful saying, and reposes unsuspecting confidence in the blood of Jesus, shall be saved ; that this faith, the gift of God, by which we are justified, is the hallowed instrument of our sanctification ; and that by the restoration of the divine image on the mind in holiness, we are prepared for that superior state of glory to which we are called in the gospel. This is true religion, that comes from God, and leads to God, and is seated in the heart. The change from darkness to light is by the grace of God. It is called in scripture a “ being created anew in Christ Jesus ;” and unto good works, that God has ordained we should walk in them. Thus the gospel, while it reveals Jesus as our righteousness, promotes true holiness, and is its only foundation. The law of

God, which condemns all flesh, is accounted by the christians, holy, just, and good. They see it fulfilled by Jesus for them. "He bore our sins in his own body on the accursed tree." 1 Peter. Thus in mercy they are redeemed from the sentence and curse of a broken law, by Jesus dying and rising again. In so far as they have faith in this, so in proportion will their peace abound. They have new hearts given them to love God, and all their fellow-subjects. Sin, that dreadful tyrant, is destroyed, and not permitted to rule over them any more. During their conflicts with the world, and their spiritual enemies, they have in view that "eternal rest that remains for the people of God." This, reader, is the only true liberty. I pray God that it may be more and more enjoyed by every true christian. But to return to our subject.

Under the very worst governments in different nations, christians may enjoy this liberty, though much oppressed in other respects. Whoever has the power in any state, or lead in religious matters, will be jealous of others*: but if christians so understand the nature of Christ's spiritual government, as to aspire after none of these things, such rulers, even in religious matters, have nothing to fear from Christ's subjects.

My fellow christians and brethren, let me beg of you to think how God has over-ruled matters in this

* When men cry out, "The church is in danger," you must convince them that their fears are vain.

country; and how much we enjoy. Perhaps you will say "It is our right:"—No.—What we have is a mercy; mercy is favour; the gift of God. Others, as good as we, and better, have not had half so much; therefore be thankful! be peaceable!

I am sorry to see those who make a strict profession of religion, enroll themselves in any kind of political societies. I judge no man's heart.—I suppose they think it for the good of the nation. The man of this world will contend about power, as a chief good: but Christ's disciples are commanded to obey the government, of whatever nation, they live under. If a government orders, subjects should obey, particularly Christ's disciples. If they disobey civil authority, they disobey Christ's. This peaceable conduct of christians is called, by zealous religious politicians, "a cold neutrality; a want of patriotism:" but certainly, if there are governments, they should be obeyed, unless they command things that are contrary to the authority of Christ. If we are desired not to meet for public worship; or desired to pay respect to what we esteem false worship; or to reverence that idol of Rome, the host; or any thing of a religious nature; in this case the authority of Christ can only be regarded, as lord of the conscience. But the civil authority is appointed of God; and the disciples should be obedient, not only for wrath's sake, but as regarding the authority of God. Paul was an obedient subject under

der one of the most cruel governments, and commanded the disciples to pray for such.—Rom. xiii. Thus the primitive Christians lived in subjection to the civil power; unless commanded to respect idols. Where do we find that these first Christians ever gave offence to the Roman government, in zealous contentions and meetings on political subjects? These first followers of Jesus knew that the salvation of their souls, and eternal life, was their chief good. Though accounted fools by the world, they left the affairs of nations, and nice political questions, to the legislators and governors of this world. Since they obeyed a bad government, shall disciples now disobey a good one! I say, a good one: for, in this country, we enjoy civil and religious liberty. In short, the word of God commands every disciple to obey civil authority; and to take no sword to avenge wrongs, whether they are oppressed or not. What, for example, could a disciple do (that understood the nature of Christ's kingdom) during the civil wars in the reign of Charles the First? Certainly they could not obey God, fear Him, honour the king, and at the same time take up the sword against him. Again, when this nation became a commonwealth, after much bloodshed, under Cromwell, the disciples of Christ must then obey that form of government, and not rebel. Again, when the nation chose a king, the disciples must obey that form of government, pray for its welfare, and not rebel; far less shed men's blood about forms of government. No doubt, all
men

men in power will love this obedience. Those who have not the lead in government will be no friends to such quiet principles; yet, when they come into power they will wish to be obeyed as well as their predecessors; and the religion of Jesus teaches it. But it will be objected, "Must not a nation fight for liberty?" I am not saying what nations are to do; if nations fight and change their forms of government, and destroy one another, they will answer to God for shedding blood.—But the followers of Jesus will know that he can save them, without shedding any man's blood about political questions, or religious. It is said by the world, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, love your enemies, and avenge not yourselves."—Mark v.

I can easily imagine that this doctrine will be called Quakerism, folly, or madness.—We can only answer, "We are not mad, but speak the words of truth and soberness." The commands of Jesus must not stoop to the will of nations. And whoever asserts, and humbly endeavours to keep Christ's commands, must expect in one way or other to suffer. Jesus has forewarned us, "that we should be hated by the world." The world will love its own; "but I," says Jesus, "have chosen you out of the world."—John xvii. Then we cannot obey Jesus and this world. The laws of the nations of this world never can comport with the peculiar laws of Christ. Thus says the apostle, "If any man will be wise, let him" " (in

“(in the eyes of the world) become a fool that he
“may be wise.”—1 Cor. iii. 18.

Study the heavenly nature of Christ's kingdom, which is your true happiness. In short, let your light so shine before men, that they, beholding your peaceable deportment, may be led to take part with you in following Jesus.

Revolutions in nations, and rising of the people, have been foretold.—This is clear in the word of God; though no excuse for men to rise in arms, and commit acts of cruelty. Offences will come; but a woe is denounced against those that commit them. Men are only instruments in the hand of the Almighty, to bring about or hasten his holy will. The Assyrians of old were a wicked and warlike people. The prophet is directed to call them “the rod of God's anger.” “I will send you,” says God, “against a hypocritical nation.”—Isaiah. They accordingly went, and dreadfully scourged the Jews; at the same time they acted freely, and undertook the war from ambition and the sake of plunder.

Thus again, when the churches in Asia and Greece, once glorious in primitive holiness and simplicity, and patient sufferers for Christ, had departed from God, became idolatrous, and merely kept a form of christianity, instead of true holiness, we find a dreadful calamity followed. The Saracens, a cruel and
fierce

fierce people, were held in the hand of God, as his rod to scourge and destroy, to pull down their idols, and plant a cruel government over them. Hence the eastern church with its capital, anciently Bizantium, now the seat of luxury, effeminacy, and wickedness. Thus the most cruel people fulfil the counsel of God, in a way altogether righteous; yet too deep for the scanty wisdom of mortals to explain.

We find a Henry the Eighth of England, cruel and despotic, a wicked man, used as an instrument in the hand of God to scourge the rapacious clergy, and cast off the spiritual yoke of their great head at Rome.

Again, we find, in a neighbouring nation a kind of modern Saracens, and infidels, held as a rod in the hand of God, to destroy and scourge the idolatrous western church, or Popery, to scatter their licentious clergy, and take away their idols of gold and silver*.

Thus

* Though no true Christian could mix or take part with infidels and wicked men in any nation, yet we find that God has heard the prayers of his people in the church of England, and others, "that God would bring down superstition and idolatry." But we shall give a further view of this from prophecy; which will shew us the truth of God's word; and that, though Potentates and the great men of the earth will bewail the fall of spiritual Babylon, (Rev. xvii.) yet the people of God must not join in the lamentation; but with the true church rather rejoice, that a holy Lord God avengeth the blood of his saints: as it is said in Rev. "Rejoice over her, ye
" holy

Thus wars, revolutions, bloodshed, nay, all things, are under the divine controul *; and even, as it is said, "The wrath of man shall praise thee."

While the Christian should flee from such scenes, yet the mind ought to fix on God; in the midst of commotions, those words should be his stay, "Be still, and know that I am God." Christ is king in Zion; and all will at last be safe with those who become subjects of this Prince of Peace, whose reign and kingdom shall never have an end.

The nations before God are as "the drop in the bucket: the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers:" yet, amongst these grasshoppers we find much pride, ill becoming their dependant situation

"holy prophets and apostles." Thus the present fulfilling of God's word ought to be very confirming to the hearts of God's people. This should operate as a mighty reason for disciples to be a quiet people. The little politics and disputes of men are poor and trivial, when compared to the great things of God, to which true Christians are called in the gospel. Let preachers and people regard the example of primitive Christians. We never find the holy apostle, and quiet followers of Jesus, imprisoned for preaching about politics.—No: They suffered for professing the peaceable religion of Jesus, and left politics to the men of the world.

* If this great truth was really believed, how would it calm and compose the minds of fierce politicians, aristocrats and democrats. Cruelty and revenge would be banished, and peace take possession of the breast.

as weak mortals, upon whom Death is ever ready to seize, and cut off as the feeble insect.

Thus God will teach that all things are in his hand. He holdeth the stormy winds. When Christ was in the ship, and during the storm, his poor affrighted disciples cried out, "Lord, save, or we perish." Immediately his power and godhead were discovered; he commanded the winds, and they obeyed the voice of their God. So he now controuls, permits the storms of revolutions, and again will say, "Peace, be still." Let the true Christian then think, that kings, emperors, armies, and people, are under God's direction; that he pulleth down one kingdom and setteth up another; makes wicked men accountable for their actions; yet overrules all for his own glory, and the good of the kingdom of Christ.

The mind will thus be calm in the midst of storms. Christians will have no need to turn keen politicians, far less to mix with those that shed blood, to spoil or destroy their neighbour in any way; but to live like the children of peace under whatever form the governments of nations are conducted; to obey the civil authorities in all things, except they order any thing contrary to the religion of Christ*.

* The reader will find this subject more fully investigated by my Christian friend in his Exhortations on Subjection to Government.

Therefore,

Therefore, if ordered to carry on the ambitious and cruel wars of nations, they must with respect declare, that "it is better to obey God than man." Nations repel the unjust attacks of their neighbours, because they will not suffer loss or receive affronts, without due satisfaction: but the subjects of Christ's kingdom are led by his Spirit to love their enemies, to suffer loss, and receive affronts, without taking up arms to shed the blood of their enemies. Therefore the disciples of Christ must not interfere, or say when a nation of this world should make war or peace. Thus Christ's kingdom and its subjects ever stand opposed to the maxims of the world; to all rebellion; to all retaliation; to all riot, anarchy, bloodshed, and war. It thrives in peace; is a friend to government and good order; loves toleration, civil and religious liberty, and renders unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. Christians dare not encourage that kind of ambition so highly esteemed in the world, as being wicked in the sight of God. Thus, in nations, long prayers are composed by men ignorant of the nature of Christ's kingdom, that God would assist them to destroy their enemies; and keeping fasts when going to shed blood. Finding no countenance for such fasts from Christ, men directly go back to the wars of the Old Testament; leave the spirit of christianity, and become half Jews. The opposing nation also make fasts, and keep days, that God would assist them to destroy their enemies. Hence christians, praying in different nations against
one

one another run into sin, disobey God, and encourage cruel wars and revenge, totally opposite to the spirit of the gospel of Christ. There is no wonder to see ignorant men observing such fasts and prayers. But to see Christ's disciples thus go back, and take the command for fasts, not from Christ, but from men, is returning again to the Jewish economy. We are commanded to hear Christ, who only is King in Zion, in all religious services. The fast that is acceptable to God, is to put away iniquity; to undo the heavy burdens; and let the oppressed go free—Isa. lviii. But does this nation keep such a fast? No: The majority encourage the cruel slave trade. They rend the parent from the child; they rivet the chain, instead of letting the oppressed go free; they turn a deaf ear to the cries of the poor negroes; and thousands have sought a watery grave as a relief to their agonizing minds. O ye that plead for this traffic, speak no more of the cruelty of others! Your fasts are of no avail. The blood of thousands of your fellow creatures will cry against this country. Away, then, with the sinful reasonings, "that we do it for their good."—Conscience will speak truth, and say, "We do it to fill our pockets." Thank God, who has put it into the hearts of thousands to relieve such suffering. The people called Quakers, in particular, have set an example of humanity on this occasion. Would God our zealous politicians, and fighting men, would copy their peaceable behaviour, and wars would

cease to the ends of the earth. We are commanded to love peace; to pray for our king; to be humbled on account of sin, both of our own and others in the nation; and fast also, when God commands it. We must obey magistrates in all civil matters; and, even if oppressed, must forgive; and take up no arms to redress or oppose what may be wrong in government. The world is animated by its own spirit; and rising in arms is called a sacred duty, if oppressed—it is called patriotism. But christians should be actuated by the Spirit of Christ; so that it would be rebellion and resentment for them to dethrone kings, or overturn republics, on account of the mal-administration of any sort of government.

Doctor Moore, in his remarks on the French revolution, says, “ In a country (such as the old government of France) where such a system of government prevailed, insurrection is the only means of redress; and it is the duty of every lover of mankind, as soon as an occasion presents itself which promises success.” The commands of Christ to his subjects are opposite to all this—they must not take the sword or join the men of this world in insurrections. Whatever good has come from such changes, the disciples of Christ dare not do evil that good may come. This gentleman justly deprecates the shocking cruelties in France: but if he thinks an insurrection was necessary, how can he suppose an established government could be overset, in such an extensive

extensive kingdom, without bloodshed? One party thought they had as good a right to defend the old system, as the others had to attack it. Thus massacres and revenge would be the unavoidable consequence. The nations and men of the world, having this world for their chief good, will destroy one another for power and privileges; and writers will commend their courage.—But Jesus has called his people out of the world; as he says, John xvii. “They are not of the world, as I am not of the world.” God has promised his children as much of this world as is good for them, without destroying others in wars and insurrections.

I am certain a thousand objections will be made to such conduct by all the contending parties about government: be it so.—We find the whole spirit of the world contrary to the Spirit of Christ; and Christ has no where commanded his disciples to discuss that political question; or just draw a line, where obedience to government must end, and where resistance should begin. These questions will be discussed by keen politicians, and their different opinions, backed by arms, will lead them to destroy one another. Even in this and other nations true christians have been led away by the spirit of the world, to mix with such men and destroy their opponents*. It is said by them, “an eye for an eye, and

* A Jew merchant the other day told me how much evil, and often hurt to his business, came through war. I only remarked to him,

“and tooth for tooth:” but I say to you, “love your enemies;” forgive and pray for them; do them good; “that ye may be the children of God;” looking for that time, when all the little injuries you suffered in the world will be no more, that you may have a part in that resurrection to eternal life, and be owned before men and angels as the followers of Christ. Brethren, the time is short, eternity is at hand; give all diligence that “ye may be found of him in peace;” when death gets its commission all these changes will soon be over, and God will take you away.

Christian reader, let your mind be at ease; all these revolutions and commotions on earth are in God’s hand. Men are now great unbelievers of this

him, that the scriptures told us of a king that never warred, or fought; and that his subjects were commanded never to fight, but to love their enemies; and to beat their swords into plough-shares. He wishing to know who it was, I said, “it was the King of the Jews, the promised Messiah.” He then replied, “I cannot see the subjects of the king you speak of; for they love to kill one another.” I asked him where the true Israel were, when the prophet Elijah said, “I only am left.” I found he did not relish the conversation, but turned his thoughts to a question of more importance in his view; which was, to know whether some money I had paid him was good. Thus men prefer what is perishing to the salvation of their souls. And ignorance of the nature of Christ’s kingdom, by revenge and bloodshed in what are called christian nations, hardens the Jews in their infidelity. Who can read Christ’s sermon on the mount, and believe that nations at all regard it?

truth.

truth. But a powerful monarch * was obliged to confess the hand of God, in pulling down kings, and giving their dominions to others, to punish men for their wickedness.

Where then are the men that attend to this hand of God's power?—In this day of combat and bloodshed; each party boasting what they will do; generals and legislators making sure of victories before they are won; priests and people praying that God would help them to destroy their enemies; their enemies praying on the other side for a like power—retaliation and revenge. Vain man, whose foundation is in the dust, to boast of power; yet regardless of the hand of God! What are armies and fleets? They succeed no farther than God wills. The Almighty blows upon them, and for ever defeats them; when sure of success they are discomfited †. If kings, legislators, and generals, would study the scriptures, they would learn their

* Nebuchadnezzar. In this day we find the language of infidelity in almost every newspaper and conversation. The veil of second causes blinds the eyes of thousands from looking to the hand of God.

† I remember being in the house of commons during a debate on the American war.—A noble lord, then a secretary of state, after boasting of our strength and expatiating on our courage, concluded by saying, "That he promised we should be victorious." Alas! he never appeared to think of the hand of God. But the christian is taught to say, "If God will."

own weakness, and be humbled in his sight, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and who orders all things after the counsel of his own will.

It is amazing the blindness of men, and the little matters that occupy their minds. The great and dreadful commotions now in the nations, by being viewed through the medium of unbelief, appear confused.—But, reader, view them by the word of God with humble prayer; then the grand and awful scene will appear and disclose itself; and the distributive justice of God be apparent, in pulling down nations, and setting up others; over-ruling the actions of wicked men, so to hold them as rods to punish in an awful way one another, that the peaceable kingdom of Christ may be for ever established on the ruins of Antichrist.

The rulers of nations do not appear to believe this; that the fulfilment of prophecy guides, and lies at the foundation of every movement. Numbers of infidel men in a neighbouring nation endeavour to cast off and banish all thoughts of God and futurity; and no doubt it is their interest it should not be true. Dreadful state! Yet the humble scholar in the school of Christ, will see that even such men, or a nation of such, are a rod or instrument in the hand of God, now to scatter and spoil an idolatrous and licentious church, who have cruelly destroyed the peaceable disciples of Christ. When a holy and just God has avenged the blood of his servants,

vants, the rod and instruments he will break in pieces. We are astonished to find the cause of wicked men prospering, and politicians puzzle themselves to account for it; but the word of God makes it clear; and we may this day see (unless infidelity blinds our eyes), by attending to the following parts of prophecy. There is nothing contingent with God; for by the mouth of his prophets all is foretold that would ever happen. Now, reader, gather in your wandering thoughts to hear the voice of God; that our hearts may be firmly fixed, not on man's word, but on God's. Gen i. "And God said, Let there be light, and there "was light." "And God formed the cattle, and "man did he create; and for his pleasure they are "and were created." Man disobeyed this glorious Lord God; and God said, "From the dust "thou wast taken, and to dust shalt thou return." How true and awful is this sentence! In the midst of such distress, behold a Redeemer promised: "The "seed of the woman [Christ] shall bruise the head of "the serpent." When men had sunk in idolatry and wickedness, God called Abraham, and made of him a great nation—Gen. xii. Then, "Behold," says God, "this people have I formed for myself; they "shall shew forth my praise."—Isaiah xliiii. All this is the work of God. Now see these people persecuted by the ungodly; and every movement foretold of kings and armies, and exactly ordered by God. The Egyptians and their king.—The scripture saith unto Pharaoh, "For this same purpose have I raised

“thee up; that I may shew my power in thee; that
 “my name may be declared in all the earth.”—Rom.
 ix. Thus, not a persecutor, or an individual, can
 stir, or an army fight, without the divine appoint-
 ment.

Permit me now to bring down to our day this
 scripture view, which will support the man that trusts
 in God; and, if believed, will direct the politician
 in the paths of light; which without it, the changes
 on the earth will ever appear inexplicable. View,
 for a moment, the highly favoured nation, sent out
 with sore persecutions; and a great monarch, with
 his army, overthrown in the sea. View the idolatrous
 nations dreadfully overthrown by the Jews; not for
 the goodness of the Jews, but to shew the judgments
 of God. View the Jews running into idolatry, and
 armies of wicked men ordered of God to destroy
 and kill them with the sword.—Isaiah x. Let the
 politician here pause, and learn the reason from the
 word of God, why the cause of wicked men appears
 to prosper, and their armies prove victorious. The
 language of God is bold, awful, and decided.—“O
 “Assyrians, the rod of my anger; I will send them
 “against a hypocritical nation (the Jews), and
 “against the people of my wrath.” Let us hear,
 then, the command they receive from God: “I
 “will give them a charge to take the spoil, and
 “tread them down like the mire in the streets.”—
 Isaiah x.

Now, reader, you may consider what guides nations and armies; though such nations and armies "think not so."—Isaiah x. 7. They say, "We will spoil and conquer."—No: but God holds their hand, and causes them to spoil others for their wickedness. But let us view their end.—"When I," says God, "have performed my whole work with them, then I will punish and consume them."—Isaiah x. 12.

Thus nations and kings get their commission from God: and we may now behold a command given to spoil and destroy the wicked church of Rome; to pull down her idols of gold and silver, by the hands of wicked and infidel men. Again, see the wicked and proud Babylonians, and their infidel king, sent of God, and commanded to destroy Jerusalem, on account of her idolatry; priests and people very corrupt, and given up of God.—Isa.—Jer. xxix. 21. Again, let us a moment consider the overthrow of these men, and God's calling forth another, viz. Cyrus, and the Medes and Persians, to destroy Babylon, for her cruelty to the poor Jews.—See Isa. and Jer. Thus the student in God's word will see clearly what puzzles the wise politician.

This day we see spiritual Babylon, the church of Rome, the greatest of all enemies to the church of Christ, with as many idols as Babylon of old, terribly overthrown; her priests scattered and her idols melted
down:

down: not by the hand of Protestants; but by the very men whom their priests taught to worship them. How awful are the judgments of God! As clear as former prophecies were fulfilled on old Babylon, so clear shall we see others fulfilled on this great spiritual Babylon. The news of the day, with battles, and other things, lead the giddy; the politician of more thought, he imagines that this or the other thing will happen: but the word of God informs us certainly what will happen. Thus the great spiritual power of Rome is marked out, its character drawn, and its dreadful destruction foretold. Take the following short view of it, as it is of much importance, and will now discover what the wisest politician never could, without the word of God. If the few thoughts already given, and firmly supported by scripture, shew, that nations and their armies are directed by God, we must be running fast into infidelity, to deny that the same God now directs all nations. The church of Christ must appear at last glorious, and that great rival power, Antichrist, be destroyed. Let it ever be far from Christ's disciples to plead for persecution.—No: We should learn of him, who said, "If they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another." It has been the character of this wicked church to persecute; but we should plead the cause of Christ's truth with meekness, temper, and love to the souls and bodies of those who oppose that blessed cause, that must at last triumph.

Who

Who ever could have supposed, if the scriptures had not foretold it, that after the persecutions of Christ's church by the Heathen and Roman Emperors, there would arise a power under the Christian name at Rome, that would massacre hundreds of thousands in the name of God, set up idols, and in wickedness outdo all the Pagans of antiquity? This wicked power has rejected the true faith of Christ; and has put their own merits and wretched penances in the place of the merits of Christ; and God rejects them for this sin. They reject and condemn the only Mediator, the Lord Jesus, and put a parcel of old saints in his place; and God rejects them, and now gives them into the hands of men who disregard all religion; because the church of Rome disregards and corrupts the true religion of Christ. They have murdered thousands of Protestants, lest the true faith should prevail; and God now gives them into the hands of wicked men, to avenge the blood of his servants, and to visit them for unrepented iniquity*.

Thus it was foretold of this power, called "The man of sin"—2 Thes. the great apostasy from the faith of Christ; and this apostasy produces a pope, and thus a succession of popes, corrupt in their doctrines, and cruel and licentious in their lives;

* I have conversed with many individuals of that church, who abhor persecution: but, as a body, they have not abjured their other wickedness; and, as a body, God will visit for this.

worse than infidels, because, under the name of Christ, they act like infidels. They have given commands to destroy the commands of God; selling pardons and indulgences, to corrupt whole countries; forbidding marriage (2 Thes.), and yet winking at whoredom. The apostle calls this "the doctrine of devils."—1 Tim. The Council of Trent, with its impious decrees, as published by their own authority, will prove all this. Hence we find by that council, all Protestants are called heretics; and a blind belief demanded under pain of damnation. Where have they ever abjured and recanted the decrees of that wicked council? They adore and pray to saints, and thus rob God of his glory. The following is found in one of their books: "My dear angel St. Michael, and saints and saintesses, come and assist me in my necessities;" and much more of this idolatrous worship. That eminent servant of Christ, Paul, rejected such adoration with the greatest abhorrence. The angel also cried, in the Revelation, "See thou do it not." To this day they rob God of the glory due to his holy name; who has said, "My glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to graven images."—Jer. But there is a dreadful threatening against them for still continuing such corrupt worship and licentious practice: "I," says God, "gave them space to repent, and they repented not."—Rev. Thus by a departure from God and rebellion against his laws, men are given up, as the apostle says, "to strong delusions, that they should believe a lie."

The

The zealous followers of the Pope, now finding their spiritual power destroyed, make a vehement outcry against infidel men for worshipping reason; but with what justice can they abuse others, when they, contrary to God's word, and reason, fall down and worship a bit of a wafer? Neither can such corrupt worshippers, with any justice, blame the zealous Ephesians for adoring the goddess Diana.—Acts xvii. In short, worshipping saints, the Virgin Mary, or angels, is the same as worshipping Diana, or reason, or liberty, or Jupiter. The name only is different, the thing is identically the same. But an awful judgment will fall on that church, who with the scriptures in their hands, set up what is so hateful in the sight of a just and holy God.

Now we see at this day her judgments coming. Oh! that men would flee, before it is too late, out of this spiritual Babylon! The blood of God's people cry to him: the apostle John saw, "under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God." What follows shews Christ's disciples, that they were not permitted to revenge themselves; only I hope it will be heard by every persecutor and cruel person; "And they cried with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them?"—Rev. vi. And, says Christ, "will not God avenge his own elect, that cry unto him?"—Luke xvii.

It is shocking to humanity to read of the massacres for which God will consume the Roman Church.— Not only Europe, but the poor South Americans, were murdered by unfeeling priests, and Jesuits. These last called themselves “The Society of Jesus;” but they appeared more like a society of the devil. Not longer than the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, the close of last century, one of this society made that king revoke the edict of Nantz (as we have already said); when the Protestants, to the number of one hundred thousand, were hunted and murdered by dragoons and wicked priests. The pope commended this cruel persecution. Thus, as prophecy foretold of that church, “they have been drunk with the “blood of the saints, and the martyrs of Jesus.”— Rev.

As persecution has ceased through philosophy, and men are withdrawing from the Romish church, we must by no means charge the guilt of others upon the modern priests, who abjure persecution. But as that church still goes on in all other parts of false worship; in their idolatrous mass; in their worship of saints, making the sacrifice Christ Jesus not sufficient, as once offered for our iniquities; and do not repent and turn to God; the scriptures declare their downfall; nor could almost all the powers of Europe prevent infidel and cruel men from pulling down their idols. The other powers are astonished at this: but who can hold up what God is pulling down?

The

The nations in former years were blinded, and their kings were stirrup-holders to the great apostate, the pope. Nay, he pretended to absolve subjects from their allegiance to their lawful sovereigns; and often preached rebellion to others. Now we see others rising against him. It is a strong expression of the prophet, foretelling what mischief this spiritual Babylon should make: he says, "The nations have drunk of the wine of Babylon; therefore the nations are mad." Great has been the madness of fallen men: but the spiritual wine, which the pope has in all ages given his deluded followers, has made more madmen in Europe than all other systems joined together. Witness the large draughts of this wine given the nations, and the dreadful effects it produced, when five hundred thousand men, mentally intoxicated with it, sallied forth in the cruel crusades, and destroyed themselves, and as many of their fellow creatures, to take a bit of ground which the pope made them believe was very holy.

But men did not think this enough; these spiritual impostors at Rome gave larger doses to the people in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; they again became mad, massacred thirty thousand in Paris and in the provinces, deluging also the valley of Piedmont with the blood of poor protestants.

This country also pledged them in the cup of this abomination and cruelty. They took a large draught, and

and the effect it produced, was roasting men and poor women alive to the number of six hundred. This cup of spiritual delusion went round, and Ireland took a draught. Its effects were, massacres and murders of men, women, and children; near twenty thousand.

The nations being tired with drinking and slaughter, turned away their heads. God glorified his name in the meek sufferings of his saints, pitying his own; when the light of a preached gospel at the glorious reformation breaking out, men became sober. Many kings and nations began to find out the imposition; and Rome, who called herself the true church and spouse of Christ, was detected, and found, by the light of God's word, to be only a whorish woman, selling her spiritual wares for money.

The true church of Christ stands ever opposed to this false church; and as the prayers of the church of Christ have been against the church of the pope, it must fall. The church of England prays with fervor against this false church; it calls them "cruel and "blood thirsty enemies."—The church thanks God for deliverance from the "hellish malice" of Popish "conspirators." And no doubt we cannot be too thankful to our God for such mercies. The church of England also prays, that our king may be an "instrument to protect the truth;" and that "popery, fanenefs, superstition, and idolatry, may be destroyed."

“ed.” God has heard the prayers of his people; and we now see the superstition and the idols of Popery dreadfully overthrown by the hands of infidel men. God grant that we may be kept from taking part with cruel men, whom God only uses now as his rod, to avenge the blood of his saints on a cruel church. Thus the holy word of God is fulfilled *. Blood will cry for vengeance. Though the men of the present day in that church have not shed blood, yet they are warned to flee from her as devoted to destruction. Babylon of old, for her persecution of God’s people, was destroyed, though those that shed the blood of the Jews were dead.—They did not repent, and they were consumed. Jerusalem, for stoning the prophets, crucifying Christ and his apostles, was destroyed, though those were dead that shed that blood.—They did not repent, and they were consumed. Many other instances may be given. The church of England in her prayers has the same view—When speaking of cruel men shedding the blood of their king, they pray “that the nation “may be freed from the vengeance of his blood.” Thus all cruelty, whether political or religious, God will punish. Our Lord Jesus tells the Jews, “that “upon them would come all the righteous blood “shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous

* I would refer the attentive reader to Dean Newton on the Rise and Fall of Popery. Also see the excellent Introduction to Brown’s Bible on the Popish corruptions.

Abel down to Zacharias. Matt. xxiii.—They did not as a body repent, and as a body they were destroyed and scattered. Then, as God spared not the natural branches, shall we think he will spare Antichrist, in whom is found so much blood? Jesus lamented over Jerusalem; that compassionate Jesus, whose footsteps we should follow.—“O Jerusalem! “Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered you “as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, “and ye would not!” May we not this day say, “O Babylon! Babylon! we warn you in mercy to “your souls; flee from the dreadful judgments coming on.” Are there any that fear God in her? O hear the voice of Jesus; “Come out of her, my “people, lest, being partakers of her sins, ye should “partake of her plagues.”—Rev. xvii.

When corrupt nations and churches have filled up the measure of their iniquity, then a holy God, jealous of his own glory, will scatter them on the face of the earth*. What must the iniquity of the church

* Conversing with a priest the other day, I remarked that I had observed, when in France, the Sabbath-day was not at all regarded after four or five o'clock in the afternoon. The playhouses were opened; gaming-houses; sports and idleness among the lower ranks; and cards and dice among the higher orders. The man very honestly said to me, “Ah, Sir! we suffer this day for these things.” God grant that their eyes may see the woes denounced, and flee from a corrupt church, and become the subjects of Christ's kingdom. They think us heretics; but let us, by laying the truth before them, with kindness, endeavour to win them to Christ.

of

of Rome be, amongst all her other sins, to forbid the people to search or read the word of God, in direct opposition to the command of Christ? They spoke to the people in a foreign tongue, keeping them in gross ignorance. This in opposition to the word of God; as the apostle says, "they are barbarians one to the other." Now God gives them up into the hands of infidel men who regard no scriptures, because they wickedly hid the scriptures from others.

I hope my reader will pardon that I have been so long on this part of my subject. Only now calmly remark the difference between this church, and the spiritual, heavenly, and holy church of Christ. But as many defend her; nay, in all ages have taken the sword in such a cause; shall not the subjects of Christ's kingdom defend the truths and honour of their Prince?—But what a difference in their weapons!—No sword nor gun; no spear to destroy men.—No: The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and the shield of faith, (Eph. v.) are the only weapons which prove mighty through God to conquer the rebellious heart of a sinner, and by which he will in the end totally destroy popery.

In this day of contention, how little is true christianity understood! many taking the part of wicked, infidel, and cruel men, who kill and destroy, and endeavour to banish from their minds all thoughts of God. Others again, pleading for superstition, and

that great enemy of the church of Christ, popery; ignorantly believing, that infidel men, consuming the idols and blind saints of the false church, is destroying religion *. But the holy word of God knows nothing of this partiality for any sort of men. The voice of God is against all iniquity, whether it goes under a political name or a religious name. God's word pays no respect to persons or parties, foreign or protestant.—Names must fall for ever. The bold infidel; the open profane; the self-righteous pharisee, whether Popish or Protestant; though they differ in degrees of crime; yet the word of God is one, which declares them all ignorant of the true faith of Christ.

In our present day, we hear the deists of one country crying out against the atheists of another; the self-righteous papist, with his idols, exclaiming against both; the fashionable finners, with their mistresses;—Gamesters, drunkards, adulterers, and

* In Dr. Moore's Journal, we find but a few years ago, that a young gentleman being in liquor, and striking an old wooden image of the virgin, the priests made the people believe that the idol was much affronted, and out of zeal for the religion of the pope, they murdered the young man to appease the anger of this image. Now we find this corruption of true religion has broke out into revenge against these images. As the pope and his clergy had corrupted the people's minds, and the people now finding out the cheat, they run into the extreme, and cruelly persecute others. Thus the fallen nature of man appears, both in political and religious cruelty. Let the serious reader compare Christ's religion to all this.

such

such like, crying out against other men for casting off their religion. I know there are different degrees in all these crimes; some outrage common decency; others keep mistresses, drink, game, and swear, in more private corners, and say with the fool, "God seeth us not." Tell such men of the true religion of Christ; that the wrath of God is revealed against all sin; that they walk in the broad way that leadeth to destruction; that they must come to Christ for salvation; that unless they are born again of the Spirit of God, they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; Alas! these men will revile you; call you, perhaps, a methodist, or enthusiast. But if this is methodism, or enthusiasm, then it is our glory; knowing that Jesus has said, "They will cast your name out as evil, for my sake."—And again, "Woe be unto you when all men speak well of you."—Luke vi. Thus, by establishing the true faith of Christ, the false will be discovered. We have nothing to glory in over others.—The most eminent christian can only say, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief."—1 Tim.

Then, my christian reader, while men contend for false religion, let us, for the glory of our Lord Jesus, and in love to our fellow men, contend to the end of our lives for "that faith once delivered to the saints." The disciples of Christ are taught by his spirit to pray, "Thy will be done," whatever they suffer for their attachment to the laws of Christ. Moses chose rather

to be amongst the despised Israelites, and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, to keep company with the children of God. I can easily suppose the polite people of that day thought him a great fool. Thus, all that follow Christ now will be despised more or less. This is a plain proof, that countries professing to be christians, are not real disciples of Him they call Master.—Awful consideration! Therefore, O Christian, take heed you do not follow the many, after the maxims of the world; you must be thought singular if you follow Jesus. Study to be quiet; to live as peaceable subjects under this or any other government, whether the government is a usurped one or not*. If you should be in a country unhappily divided by civil war, you must obey those that have the power in all lawful commands, and join no side by taking the sword to destroy men, as Jesus has told us to forgive our enemies. What are all their contentions and bloodshed? To gain a little honour that will perish; or perhaps a few more acres of ground; or to establish some political opinion. If a kingdom is gained by bloodshed, what will it profit? Alas! misery follows it. But the kingdom of Christ shall be for ever. It consists not in violent political contentions, iniquity, bloodshed, or war; but in

* Suppose a disciple of Jesus now in France (1793); one party gives orders that he must fight for them, a contrary part for them. Both sides are agreed that it is right to destroy one another. Oh! when will Christ's disciples be agreed to follow him, to pity such men, and flee from the scenes of bloodshed and war?

“righteousness,

“righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” This makes the true christian’s life; and without this Holy Spirit in the heart, there can be no true religion.

The disciples of Jesus will never be the majority or prevailing party in any nation.—Far from it.—He calls them “a little flock,” Luke xii. 32. How different are they from the men of the world, whose ambition, pride, and bloodshed, are so often extolled by the various contending parties, so opposite to the kingdom of Christ! The apostle exhorts christians by saying, “But, thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, patience, and meekness.” The very reverse of this is cried up by the world*. Men compare themselves with others, and think they have made progress, because they are not so outwardly profane. But, alas! would men compare themselves with the purity of the religion of Christ; the spirit, nature, and tendency of that only holy religion; how would they fall down before God in deep humility of heart, and each pray, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” How many thousands in this nation ridicule those who fear God?—But for the want of this fear of God, we may attribute all our national iniquities; want of honour to the king, and

* Have we not heard, in this day, assassination applauded, revenge rewarded and admired, by both contending parties in their sinful and high political zeal? This is not the spirit of Christ; but the spirit of resentment.

reverence for lawful authority ; subjection to the laws of our country ; with fierce and foolish political contentions. These all spring and grow from the want of the fear of God. Would to God that it was more laid to heart by us all ! The word of God compliments no man, but commands all men to repent ; kings and princes, governors and governed. God, by the prophet, says, that he will pierce through kings in the day of his wrath, and desolate kingdoms for the wickedness of priests * and people. Witness France, in which we see the word of God is fulfilled. Dreadful are the judgments of God on corrupt governors, licentious people and priests. They look to second causes, and say, Why did not our army fight better, and our government would have been saved ? Why did the king call the people together ? and why a thousand other things ? Alas ! unhappy people ! once great and proud like Tyre of old, the hand of the Almighty

* Those who have fled to this country we have clothed and fed, and kept from their cruel persecutors. May we that have received mercy from God, ever imitate the divine goodness in shewing mercy to others, whether Turks or Papists. " If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink." Some would wish to destroy wicked men ; but the Spirit of Jesus, if in our hearts, will lead us to pray for their conversion. While we thus do them good, may we be delivered from all the shocking worship and wicked practice of the church of Rome. There may be some in that church that fear God ; it concerns them deeply to flee from her ; for God will avenge the blood of his saints, massacred and slain by those enemies to the church of Christ in all ages. As a body they have not abjured their wickedness and cruelty,

was

was against you ; your time was come. Thus that great monarchy is overthrown, that made other nations tremble. That monarchy that endeavoured the fall of England by assisting our children in America against their parent state, has been dreadfully judged for causing so much bloodshed.

Oh ! that the inhabitants of England would lay this to heart ; and take warning by the destruction of others. The holy scriptures are in our hands ; let us repent and turn to God, and put away our iniquities. We call ourselves christians. Alas ! what will that avail, if we do not follow Christ ? Thousands glory in the name of patriot, yet live like those that have never heard of the name of Jesus. Loose and immoral men can never be good patriots ; however they oppose one another in their political opinions, it is of little consequence while they continue hostile to the laws of Christ. Would to God that legislators and people would seriously consider these eternal things ; then a reform in parliament of the most important kind would take place. To see the members of both houses of parliament turning to God, and becoming the disciples of Christ ; then every other reform would follow of the most useful kind to our country *. I must declare with the scriptures, that " the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." I

* I hope there are many in both houses that fear God. I pray their number may be increased ; but I enter not into political questions, my subject is of infinitely more importance.

must declare, that the casting off this fear of God brings dreadful calamities on nations and individuals. Every one says it is the fault of another. This is our ruin, each shifts it from themselves. Another says it is not his business. But, reader, pause a moment, I entreat you.—God commands every man to repent, and to consider how far his personal sins bring the judgments of God on his country. This I have already shewn; therefore foolish disputes between churchmen and dissenters is of no avail; nothing but the love of God in Christ Jesus will lead us to love others; and where love is, all other good will follow.

Great are our complaints of the want of morality in this nation; but can we wonder at this, when there prevails such ignorance of that foundation upon which true christian morality is built*. Can we look for a

* An eminent poet has said, “that it is of little consequence what is our faith, if our lives are in the right.” Such sentiments are dangerous, and full of infidelity. We can have no hope before the awful tribunal of God, but by a true faith in Christ. The apostle says, “The life I now live, is by the faith of the Son of God.” And this faith taught him “to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this world.” Our lives cannot be in the right any other way.

I must here remark another common saying, though not so fashionable as the above, yet destructive and full of infidelity. We hear it almost every where; when speaking on religious subjects, they add, that “every one must go to heaven their own way.” But this is impossible.—God will not be mocked.—Men must go to heaven in God’s way, or never. Now, says Jesus, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Thus there is but one way; and if we go not that sure way, we miss the salvation of our souls.

superstructure

superstructure without a foundation? Can men ever bear the fruits of faith, without the faith of Christ? Can we ever truly mourn for our sins, without looking on Him whom we have pierced? Hundreds of preachers get as far in their divinity as Seneca and other heathens got; they lay not Christ as the foundation of true morality, and are then surprised they see so little of it. From such preachers, O christian, turn away; God never sent such, and they will appear, on examination, only to be deists under the name of reverend. How wicked in the sight of a holy God must this be! May that God grant repentance to such preachers; and save their poor hearers, and bring them to Christ, as the only foundation of their soul's hope, and of all true morality.

Nothing hardens men more than the loose lives of the clergy. They betray the cause of truth, which they swear to defend; they confirm the sceptic and strengthen the deist. Though I do not believe that the church of England, or any other of a national kind, can properly be termed a church of Christ; yet, thank God, there are men in it who preach Jesus and live accordingly.

Reader, I must now bid you farewell. Only, before we part, permit me to point you to God, as the alone object of true and eternal happiness through Jesus Christ. If you are seeking happiness in this world, you will miss the true road. The things that
are

are in the world cannot afford true peace ; turn them about, and again run the giddy round of fashion, worldly honour, and riches ; disappointment will finish your short journey. Turn, then, to God, and repent ; this will bring true peace to yourself, honour to God, and good to men. I pray this may be your case through the grace of God ; that you may come out from the evil of the world, and lay to heart what is the meaning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

My christian friends and brethren, of whatever party, that are made partakers of the spirit of Christ, farewell. I intreat you to study God's holy word with much prayer. Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren.—Heb. ii. Marvellous abasement ! He died for us.—Astonishing love ! The Captain of our Salvation made perfect through suffering ! Oh ! christians, see that ye obey him from love. Come out from all antichristian assemblies. Keep his worship pure. This is a day of much evil ; and you should shew your attachment to Jesus in keeping his commandments. The love of many waxeth cold ; professors of christianity getting rich in the world have their hearts where their treasure is. We enjoy many mercies and privileges in this country ; let us be thankful for them, and use them for God's glory. Let us be quiet and peaceable people ; praying for all men ; disturbing no government ; avoiding all furious political disputes about what
may

may be the best form of it. Far less should we take the sword to embroe our hands in the blood of others about such questions.

Remember, O christian, Christ had not where to lay his blessed head. Jesus has told us, that his followers should be but a poor, despised, and afflicted people, in comparison of the rest of the world. The things that the men of the world are fighting for, can never afford permanent joy; therefore leave them to fight about kingdoms and republics, points of false honour, and worldly pomp and vanity; it is their chief good, and they will fight for it. Satan is the God of this world, and it lieth in the wicked one.—John ii. You have a heavenly prince to fight for, “the Prince of Peace.” If the rulers of republics or kingdoms command you to enter into their cruel and bloody wars, be ready, in meekness and fear, to declare, that you “must obey God rather than men.”

Brethren, lay these things to heart. Christ says, that “he has chosen you out of the world,” (John xvii.) that ye may be holy in all manner of conversation. Often think the end of all things hastens on. God is fulfilling his holy word.—Dreadful judgments will come on the world. Oh! that we may now attend to the voice of Christ; that when the midnight cry is made, we may be found like the wise virgins, and enter into the kingdom of Heaven. “Seeing, “then,” says the apostle, “that all these things shall
“ be

“ be dissolved, What manner of persons ought ye to
“ be in all holy conversation and godliness ?”—Peter
chap. iii. I pray that these important truths may be
written on the heart of every disciple; and I have now
to crave your charity, by putting up your prayers for
me, that both reader and writer may at last be found
washed in the Redeemer’s blood, and made holy by
his Spirit, and thus rejoice together in the day of
Christ. I am also bound to intreat the reader to par-
don what is faulty or inaccurate; for I am sure he has
had many opportunities to exercise his candour. I
cannot apologize for writing what I believe to be the
mind of God; and I can appeal to that all-seeing
eye, that I have not willingly endeavoured to pervert
any text of scripture, to make it speak contrary to the
spirit and nature of the heavenly kingdom of Jesus
Christ. I have not willingly said any thing to give
offence to Jew, Gentile, or the church of God. But
I have endeavoured, and do think it the will of God,
that we should endeavour to spread the kingdom of
Christ; to lead men to God; and exhort Christ’s disci-
ples to be quiet and peaceable, under this, or whatever
government they live; and be thankful for such, pray-
ing for all men, and fleeing the scenes of bloodshed
and war. I have endeavoured to shew, that all the
revolutions in nations are under the divine controul;
that the apostate church of Rome and its idolatry are
quickly coming to an end; and that no disciple of
Christ dare lift the sword to bring about revolutions,
or counter-revolutions, but to hear Christ’s voice say-
ing,

I

ing, "Vengeance belongeth to God." Let, then, the potsherds of the earth dash one against the other, for different bits of this world, power, and political opinions, all fulfilling the word of God; only let us know, that "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."—Rev. xviii. To the arms of this almighty power let us commit our souls and bodies. And now, "to the King, eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, be glory for ever through Jesus Christ. Amen."

SCRIPTURAL SUBJECTION
TO
CIVIL GOVERNMENT;

IN AN EXHORTATION
ADDRESSED TO
REAL CHRISTIANS.

By THOMAS SHERATON.

*Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and
unto God, the things which are God's.*

Matt. xxii. 21.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

NOITATONXN MA MI

REPORT TO

REAL CHRYSTIAN

NOTARY AT MOUNTAIN

unto God, the things which are God's
unto Caesar, the things which are Caesar's; and

SCRIPTURAL SUBJECTION

TO

CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

1 Pet. ii. 17.

Fear God: Honour the King.

THE fear of God, according to the sense of the sacred scriptures, sometimes imports a dread and awe of his divine majesty, as the sovereign of heaven and earth, of life and of death; who giveth life to all, and whose prerogative alone it is to take it away: "I kill, and I make alive, I wound, and I heal; "neither is there any that can deliver out of my "hands."—Deut. xxxii. xxxix, xl, xli.

But the fear of God has for its object not merely the destruction of the body by natural death, for after he hath killed the body he hath also power to cast into hell. Thus runs the solemn exhortation of the Lord of Life to his disciples in the days of his tabernacling here below. "Fear him, who after he hath "killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say, fear "him"—Luke xii. 5. This species of fear was suited to preserve from apostasy, and to guard the disciples against the fear of man.

In general, however, the fear of God enjoined upon christians implies a filial regard to him, which includes the esteem and reverence due from a son to
F 2 a father:

a father : and, from the consideration of this relationship subsisting, God reasons with his people thus :
 “ A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master ;
 “ if then I be a father, where is mine honour ? ” —
 Malachi, i. 6.

The fear therefore which includeth and is connected with a due reverence and esteem for God, must be peculiar to the sons of God, and is the effect of his own power in the great work of regeneration, or the new birth, by which we become the sons and heirs of God through Christ.

The exertion of this power in this important work is independent of the will of man in every point of view : “ Of his own will begat he us, with, or by, the “ word of truth, that we should be a kind of first “ fruits of his creatures.” — Jam. i. 18. * The fear of God thus implanted in our hearts, is the great blessing and distinguishing privilege of the new covenant, by which its transcendant excellency above the old is fully manifested, and redounds much to the praise and glory of the grace of God. The fear of God, inculcated simply by the tenor of the old covenant, given at Sinai, gendered to bondage ; but

* I mean not that men are made to believe against their choice, but by what power is it that we choose the gospel, which we naturally hate ? Is it not God that shews us our perishing state as sinners, and at the same time presents the food of life to our view ? So that as starving souls we eat both from choice and of necessity.

that

that which the new covenant teaches gives liberty and life, and leads us to cry, Abba Father, as the consequence of receiving the spirit of adoption.—Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6. 24.

The promise of the new covenant is as follows:—
 “I will give them one heart and one way, that they
 “may fear me for ever: I will make an everlasting
 “covenant with them, that I will not turn away from
 “them to do them good; but I will put my fear in
 “their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”—
 Jer. xxxii. 39, 40.

Brethren, the fear of God, taken in these two senses, then, will be found, in our experience, to answer every valuable purpose for which he hath appointed it, both as it respects the glory of his own name and our eternal good. For whilst the latter secures our obedience arising from a sense of his mercy, goodness, and loving-kindness to us in the Son of his love; the former guards us against trampling upon his sacred laws and ordinance, from a fear of its consequence, which is eternal death. The wisdom of God is conspicuous in the appointment of it; as these two species of fear so wonderfully answers to our fallen state both of mind and frame, in this world of temptation, sin, and misery.

Do we, from an evil heart of unbelief, presume to depart from his laws and ordinances? Then God appears as the Avenger of his holiness, and sets before

us the awful consequences of wilfully sinning against him; so that if we are his sons, we shall tremble whilst we listen to such as the following scriptures:

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation—Heb. ii. 3:” “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment,” &c.—Heb. x. 26, 27.

Are we walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless, and thus enjoying the light of his countenance? still we must fear him, but it is in the filial sense; for the psalmist says, “Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord alway;” which cannot mean, that we are always to fear his wrath, but that we constantly reverence and esteem him as the Father of mercy and the God of all grace. The apostle to the Philippians enjoins that they should work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; adding, for theirs and our consolation, that “it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—See ii. 12, 13.

But this fear is that of a son, not of a slave. It is the beginning of heavenly wisdom, and keeps us in the path of life. It is the principle by which the Lord maintains a near correspondence or communion with his people. To such he has promised to look, “even to them that are poor and of a contrite spirit,
“and

“and who tremble at his word.”—See *Isaiah lxyi. 2.*
Psaln xxxiv. 18.

If then we thus fear God, and are the subjects of the new covenant, we are called upon with reverence to attend unto the apostolic exhortation, to “honour the king in connection with our fear of God.” We are more particularly to attend unto this duty at a time like this, when many are disposed to speak evil of the king and of those in authority, and even amongst such are found those who profess the christian name.

If it be admitted that this is at all a proper subject of christian exhortation, certainly it is a seasonable time for it now; and in attempting this, I shall pursue the following method:

First, Prove that the fear of God here enjoined is connected with our honouring the king. And,

Secondly, Show in what respects we are to honour him.

Thirdly, In a negative sense, proving that in some particulars we ought not to honour him. And,

In the last place, enquire, Whether christians have any authority from scripture to meddle with matters of politics? Concluding with some remarks from the whole.

First, To prove that the fear of God enjoined in the text is connected with honouring the king.

This is evident from the context (see verse 13), in which Peter exhorts us to "submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme," that is, highest in authority in civil matters, "or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

The great apostle Paul, in writing to the Romans, bears testimony to the same doctrine, and exhorts christians to the exercise of this branch of the fear of God, and in such strong terms as ought to rouse the attention of all who call themselves Christ's disciples.

Not one of them is exempted from the duty; no place or age in which we live can unbind us from the sacred obligation, or make void the following unalterable law:—"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation: for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the powers? Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to

“to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”—See Rom. xiii. 1—5.

Is it not then evident from these passages, that to honour the king, and patiently submit to the higher powers, is absolutely connected with the fear of God inculcated in the text?

It is not intended by this, that christians should superstitiously bow to the name, king, or to hold his person as sacred who possesses this title. This principle would, in some cases, blend the christian system with the Jewish; a thing quite inconsistent with its nature and genius*.

It does not appear from scripture that government by a king is appointed of God in preference to other forms, if we reflect how it was that Israel of old had the first king: but as the government of kings and emperors was generally prevalent in those days in which Christ came, and in which the apostles wrote their epistles to christians, this is the only reason that can be given why christians are called upon to honour

* In the Jewish religion, or old dispensation, when the king was anointed with holy oil, and considered as a priest and prophet, his person might then be esteemed sacred, being thus set apart for the religious service of God—in which sense, the vessels or utensils of the tabernacle and temple were sacred. But what is it short of blasphemy to hear the phrase “sacred majesty” applied to earthly princes?

kings in particular, because they were chief in authority, and were principally the powers that then existed by the Lord's providence. If Christ and his apostles had lived under a representative or republican form of government, there is no reason to doubt but they would have exhorted christians to honour and to obey those in authority by delegation. The honours therefore due to a king cannot be founded on any thing, but solely on the office he sustains, which invests him with supreme power.

Some imagine, and zealously as falsely assert, that none but those whom they suppose a christian king ought to be honoured and sincerely obeyed; but the confusion and disorder, necessarily resulting from such a doctrine, would at once prove it not to be of divine origin: on the contrary, we see, and ought to admire, in this, as in a thousand other instances, the wisdom displayed in the scriptures in not grounding our subjection to kings upon any such principle; for then must a king be a compound of every thing that wears the name Christian, amongst the many opposite sects that assume that venerable title, ere he could justly claim, or be able to obtain an universal allegiance from his subjects. The office of a king, and christianity in its own nature, are totally distinct things and unconnected, as much so as a lawyer and christian; but we scruple not to say, that if either or both are christians, they will be so much the better for it.

Wherever

Wherever the supreme power of government is lodged; whether in one man; in twenty; or if in a whole nation or empire, by its representatives or delegates; such a power is, by christians, to be obeyed, because it then becomes an appointment or ordinance of God, intended for the good of the whole mutually.

And hence we are exhorted, as in the passage already cited, to "submit to every ordinance of man * "for the Lord's sake;" not religious ordinances, but the inspired writer means, every constitution formed by the general consent of men; and which being agreed to, and invested in one or in many persons, it immediately becomes a divine appointment as well as a human one; on which account christians are bound to obey for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him; and consequently, as these are sent of God, and raised up for the purpose of governing, they are, whoever they be, the ministers of God to us. "By him kings reign, and princes decree justice," "By him princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges "of the earth."—Prov. viii. 15, 16.

It is evident then, that christian subjection to government is not confined or limited to any one form in preference to another, otherwise it would have

* The phrase "every ordinance of man" is thus translated by some of the learned, *arbitrarium hominum*, a human creation or constitution. —1 Pet. ii. 13.

been mentioned in the scriptures what that form should be; nor could it have been enjoined, consistent therewith, to submit to every constitution of man, which, for the reasons now given, I take to mean, any form of government established by the common consent of a nation.

And it is further evident that government is not a mere human appointment, as some imagine, but is of divine authority, designed for the good, and not the destruction of mankind.

The power and authority that Pilate, the Roman governor, had over Jesus, was from above, as he himself declares to that ruler:—"Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above. Therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." The sense of which is tolerably clear, when we consider that Pilate had before said to Jesus, that he had power either to crucify or release him. Jesus admits that he had this power, but informs him whence it was originally derived, not merely from the emperor or people at Rome, but from above, that is, from God. Considering, then, that Pilate was in the capacity of a governor in Judea, his conduct towards Jesus was, in some degree, justifiable, but those who delivered him up to Pilate did it without the least shadow of justice or reason. Therefore, says our Lord, "he who delivered me up to thee hath the greater sin."

Which

Which comparison, however, supposes some degree of guilt in the governor, and which, in the end, appeared very conspicuous indeed; in that he suffered a person to be crucified, in whom he acknowledged there was no fault at all:—yes; he released a robber and executed an innocent man: yet his power or authority, as a civil governor, was acknowledged to be from God.

And this sense of the passage exactly coincides with what we have already quoted from Paul's epistle, written to the church of God under the same government, where he says, of the then existing heathen government, that it was ordained of God. If therefore civil government be an ordinance of God, they who resist or rebel against any form of it, rebel against not men only, but against God; and in so doing, cannot be said to fear him: "for he that is perverse in his way, despiseth him."—Prov. xiv. 2. And according to the divine conclusion, they who obstinately persevere in resisting the ordinance of God, shall, in the end, receive to themselves damnation.

Secondly, To shew in what respects we are to honour the king.

And first, We are to honour the king by praying for his eternal welfare as well as temporal happiness. According to the language of scripture, "prayers, "intercessions, and giving of thanks, are to be made
" for

“ for all men; for kings and all that are in authority:

“ for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God

“ our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved.”

Therefore as God will have all men to be saved, that is, men of every rank and station, it is plain, kings are not excluded. Hence they are an object of the christian's prayer, to the end that they, as well as other men, may obtain the salvation which is in Christ.

To honour the king in this way, is to honour him in truth and in sincerity; but not in flattery and dissimulation. When we pray for the king's salvation, it supposes him a sinner, and in a perishing state like other men, otherwise there would be no propriety in praying for his salvation. There are many flatterers round the persons of kings, especially of the ecclesiastical kind, who are ready to persuade them that the salvation of Christ wears a more benign aspect to kings than other men, as if their high office entitled them in some measure to the favour of God, and ensured their eternal salvation. But this, we see, is not the apostle's view of it; for he ranks them with other men, and gives us no authority for believing that they shall be saved in preference to the meanest peasant.

But again.—If christians are well convinced of their duty in praying for the king, not only that he may be saved, but that they under him may live in peace, godliness,

godliness, and honesty, this will effectually secure their subjection to the higher powers; for it will not be easily reconciled in the mind of a christian, at one time to pray for the king's prosperity in soul and body, and that we under him may live in peace; and at another, in direct opposition to it, take part in those measures which lead to intestine broils and factions, inconsistent with real godliness, and frequently destructive of every principle of honour and honesty.

I am persuaded that any king, however wicked, must think himself highly honoured by those subjects who make it a part of their public worship to pray for him; and it does not appear, from any principle of good reasoning, that those who refuse to pray for the king in public will honour him in private, either in thought or conversation; and if this is the case with a christian, how does it appear that he fears God, as enjoined in the text?

But, by honouring the king, according to our present form of government, it implies the two houses of parliament. These are two branches of the legislative authority in this kingdom, without which there is not a supreme power; and therefore we must honour these with our prayers in connection with the king. And if these three are to us the reigning powers, we know then to whom subjection is due.

Second, The honour which we owe to the king, and the other branches of supreme authority, ought
to

to regulate our public and private conversation when we are called upon to give our opinions in matters of politics. I mean, we ought to be afraid to speak evil of dignities, in contradistinction to those false christians whom Peter * says were *not afraid* to do it.— To speak evil of dignities, is to rail against the government under which we are placed by the Lord's appointment; to smite it by bitter words, maliciously to defame and reproach the name and characters of those in authority over us. Such a conduct must be a direct contradiction to doing honour to the king in any sense of the word; and turns out to be not only libellous against the higher powers in this world, but of a blasphemous nature against God, whose appointment government is, and whose ministers they are who govern.

But further: in honouring the king we ought not merely to avoid the language of outrage and rebellion, but we should be careful to speak with due respect and esteem for the king, on account of his high office and important charge over us, independent of his private character and conduct as a man.

And in this view we ought to venerate both houses of parliament, as branches of the legislative authority, however wicked the members of them may be in their private characters.

* 2 Pet. ii. 10.

And,

And, lastly, we ought not only to speak in the language of esteem, and with reverence ourselves, for government in general, as an ordinance of God, but we ought also to avoid the company of those who are wilfully bent on speaking evil against it.

By this, however, it is not meant that christians should be dumb on every occasion, and not be at liberty to express their thoughts upon what appears to them right or wrong in those who govern: but this we must do with such tenderness, as no way to weaken either our own, or the obligation of others to submit themselves as good subjects.

A prudent son may, with propriety, reprove a father in things that are glaringly wrong in his conduct; but it will be in such an affectionate manner, as will sufficiently indicate that he still considers the relationship to exist, and that, as a son, he ought to honour his father.

Our Lord himself reprov'd or charged sin upon Pilate, the Roman governor, who was to him as supreme in civil authority in the land of Judea; yet he submitted, and paid tribute to that authority, and, as has been observed, acknowledged that Pilate's power over him was from above.

The sin of Pilate was in not acting consistently with the nature of his office, which certainly was to

G

protect

protect peaceable and innocent persons ; for though the Jews charged Jesus with sedition and blasphemy, yet it was false, and Pilate himself was obliged to declare that he found no fault in him at all.

Surely then, when those in authority will not protect the innocent and peaceable, they are reprehensible, and those who reprove are neither criminal before God nor man. On the contrary, it would be highly offensive to God were we, because of our professed subjection to the reigning powers, to call evil good, and good evil.

The apostle Paul, more than once, objected to and questioned the propriety of the conduct of those in authority relative to himself, yet as a christian he was always willing to suffer wrong rather than resist. At Philippi, a city of Macedonia, at that time subject to the Romans, Paul was imprisoned as a disorderly person, by the magistrates, who knew not that he was a freeman of Rome ; but on hearing what God had done in the prison in favour of his servants, and being conscious of their guilt, they gave orders for his release, which, when Paul heard of, he thus replied : “ They have beaten us openly uncondemned, “ being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and “ now do they thrust us out privily : nay, verily ; but “ let them come themselves and fetch us out.”— Acts xvi. 37.

In which passage we evidently see a charge of injustice and improper conduct made against the magistrates of that city. At another time we also behold this great and faithful servant of Christ pleading his legal privileges as a freeman of Rome. At Jerusalem, when about to be examined by scourging, he interrogated the centurion with great spirit: "Is it lawful for to scourge a man that is a Roman uncondemned?"

From which passages, and others that might be cited, we see, that as a man and citizen, this eminent apostle was ever ready to plead his rights; while at the same time, as a christian, he was always willing to suffer wrongs rather than rebel against those in authority.

Thirdly, We ought to honour the king by a cheerful and ready contribution towards the support of his official authority and power, by which peace and good order may be established amongst men. By which, however, we mean not to say that these blessings are peculiar to monarchical government; but as it cannot be denied that these may, and are at present, in a great measure enjoyed by us under that kind of government, it must appear to us in a more striking light to be our duty to contribute our part towards the maintenance of such important temporal advantages. It is our duty to do this even in cases

when as christians we do not derive all those blessings for which government is principally appointed of God, and for which it is our wisdom highly to esteem it.

At Rome, when the christian name was persecuted, and when those who professed it suffered death for a crime of which they were innocent, and their judge guilty, it cannot be supposed that they had much reason to exult in the privileges derived from that government; yet, at this time, and under these circumstances, the apostle in his epistle to the church, residing in that place, enjoins that it should pay tribute to those in authority; and for this reason, because they were God's ministers, constantly attending the professed duties of their office. "Therefore," says he, "render to all their dues; tribute * to whom tribute is due, custom † to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour."—See Rom. xiii.

It may also be observed here, that although the christians at this period could not themselves obtain much, if any, civil benefit from that government, yet other men did, for which reason alone it would have been their duty to have contributed towards its support. The christian law is to do good unto all

* Tribute, was money paid into the exchequer.

† Custom, an impost or tax upon goods or merchandise.

men, even to our enemies; and therefore, even in a case where we, on account of our religion, were deprived of every benefit resulting from government, it would still be our duty to honour that government with a part of our substance, so long as we could believe that all other subjects received real advantages from it.

Our Lord himself did not enjoy much, if any, real civil protection under the Roman governor in the land of Judea, yet, for the honour of God, whose will it is that civil authority shall be established and obeyed, and for the good of mankind in general, he directs that his disciples should pay tribute to Cæsar; and to establish the vast importance of this precept in the view of his followers, we behold him working a miracle in the sea to obtain money to give for himself and Peter.—See Matt. xvii. 27. And surely it is rational as well as religious that subjects should pay for being protected; and though christians as well as other men may sometimes discern that they pay more than is absolutely necessary for their protection, yet it does not become them to find fault, especially as they are not always competent judges of the expences which attend their protection. And even when taxing increases to an oppressive degree, christians should, of all others, be the last in finding fault.

This may lead us to remark on the improper conduct of those, who both vindicate and practise smuggling,

gling, or the illegal importation of foreign goods on which is laid an impost or custom. Particularly it requires our notice, when we know it to be practised by those who profess to fear God. While they practise this, where is their fear of God, or regard to the divine and unalterable law of Jesus, "Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's?" or wherein do they honour the king as the text enjoins? If we honour him with our lips while we rob him in secret, our subjection will not prove acceptable to God, nor in the least shew that we fear him. And while, by this practice, we rob the king of his due, by law established, we at the same time injure the fair trader. This practice is by many thought to be of an indifferent kind, and unworthy the discussion of a christian; but when we seriously consider the things which such a practice involves in it, the supposed unimportance of the subject will then vanish, and the real christian will see, that he can neither fear God nor honour the king in maintaining such a commerce.

Fourth, We may and ought to honour the king by every external mark of respect; not the marks of superstitious reverence, but such as prove to others that we esteem him as God's minister, for the punishment of vice and the praise of them that do well. And this will include in it our respect for magistrates, as subordinate ministers for the same purposes; for it is evident, that where they are not regarded the king is not honoured, nor God feared,

The

The scriptures enjoin upon christians, not only to be subject to principalities and powers, but also to obey magistrates; "To be gentle, shewing all meekness to all men."—Titus iii. 1, 2.

By outward marks of respect shewed to the king and to magistrates, is to be understood an agreement and conformity to those usages and customs which men have adopted to distinguish these in their office and rank, when such customs and usages do not interfere with the authority of Christ over our consciences. One main end in such a compliance is, that we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, who are always ready either to charge christianity with disloyalty, or to be disloyal themselves.

These secretly hate that authority which lays a restraint upon their unlawful lusts and unwarrantable liberty; and for this cause they hate christianity and those who profess it, and are happy to find any flaw in their character that would most effectually expose them to the hatred of those in authority, while themselves are the real breakers of both the laws of God and men. These are the men, whose foolishness the christian conduct ought to silence, together with another class, who, while they profess to be religious, imbibe sentiments repugnant to it. They inveigh at that power and authority which affords another sect the same liberty as themselves; which power, if they themselves possessed, it would be exercised to

G 4

persecute

persecute those who should take the liberty of differing from them. Peter describes such lawless pretenders to christianity, and their teachers, as walking after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, despising government, or dominion; presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

Thirdly, To shew that, in some particulars, we are not to honour the king by our compliance with his appointments.—On this subject our Lord has given an universal maxim, and drawn the only proper line of distinction that can with safety be depended on, and that ought to regulate the conduct of every christian. Yea, it is such as ought effectually to silence every objection, and gain the assent of every reasonable man: “Render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” What king, then, can reasonably expect his subjects to honour him, who at the same time is unwilling that the people should honour God, and render unto him the worship due to his sacred name? Surely, if the kings of the earth are to be honoured, God above all must be honoured, and that in such a way as suits his own nature, and agrees with his own institutions. Are the kings of the earth jealous of their honour and dignity, and shall not Jehovah be jealous of his? Are they concerned to establish their kingdoms and secure the obedience of their subjects, and shall not the King of saints be concerned to establish his kingdom, which is an everlasting kingdom,

kingdom, and to require an universal subjection from all his people?

Here is the great distinction that every christian ought zealously to maintain in his own mind, so that whilst he honours the kings of the earth, he may not in the smallest degree mix with it the honour that is due to God only. Thus saith the prophet Isaiah on this matter; "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."—Chap. xlii. 8.

Hence the kings and governors of the earth can have no dominion over the consciences of men. The sovereign of the conscience is God alone, who at first formed it, and to whom alone it is accountable in matters of religion. And on this account, when the prophets of old addressed the people, they were careful to keep their own place, and direct men to give the glory to God, by saying, "Hear the word of the Lord," or "Thus saith the Lord." If any men on earth ever had a right to sway the consciences of men, surely the divinely inspired apostles of Christ had; yet we find, according to the doctrine of the New Testament, that they were not lords over God's heritage, but ensamples to the flock. In this view our Lord exhorts us to "call no man father upon earth, for one is your father who is in heaven."—Matt. xxiii. 9. Before his tribunal alone we must appear to give an account of the deeds of the body,

as

as we have been actuated either by good or bad principles. Wherefore, whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto kings and councils, in matters of conscience, more than God, we must judge*,

If, then, a Nebuchadnezzar should set up an image of gold, and call upon us to worship it, shall we fall down? Or if any modern monarch should establish a national religion, and insist upon all without distinction to worship in his way, however contrary to the word of God, should we honour him in this case with our compliance? Surely not. Let us remember the conduct of Shadrach and his partners, (Dan. chap. iii.) and the goodness of God in delivering them from the fiery furnace. Suppose a Darius should make a decree, that none should pray to the true God, but that all must offer up their supplications to himself. In this case we easily see the line of our duty in the conduct of Daniel, who, notwithstanding the unalterable decree, looked towards the holy temple at Jerusalem, and prayed three times a day to the true God.

But supposing that at present the higher powers do not require us to worship idols, nor prevent us from serving the true God as he has appointed; yet, if the civil statutes are mixed with certain religious requisitions, it is an infringement on the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and is an attack upon his au-

* See the boldness of Peter and John, Acts iv.

thority; and therefore we are not to honour the king by a compliance in these particulars. For instance, when we pay tithes of all we possess, who requires this at our hands? The civil and ecclesiastical authority, unnecessarily and absurdly blended together, does; but God does not. The sons of Levi had once a commandment to take tithes of the people, according to the law of God, (Heb. vii. 5.); but we are not under the Levitical priesthood. That priesthood is now changed, and of course the law of tithes is also altered; for neither were perfect, being only instituted by the law of a carnal commandment; therefore of necessity, Christ was made a priest after the order of Melchisedeck, who offered up himself without spot to God, and who now prays for us in the presence of God. To him alone therefore we bring our spiritual tithes, namely, the fruit of our heart, even thanksgiving and praise, and he, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth, receiveth them,—Heb. vii. 8.

It is evident, then, that the christian is not under that dispensation, in which it was required of God to pay tithes; and consequently, to be required to pay them is an infringement on the liberty wherewith Christ hath made christians free. To pay these without scruple, is so far to admit that we are still under a worldly sanctuary, and the imperfections of the Levitical priesthood, whose service consisted of types and shadows, referring to the time that was to come, even as the apostle says, “the bringing in a better

better hope," the eternal priesthood of Christ, by the which we draw nigh unto God.

It is in part admitting that Christ is not come in the flesh: it is also a putting out the light of the gospel, and blending the Jewish with the Christian religion.

But further, as the matter now stands, paying tithes involves in it our support of a ministry and worship, which we deem unscriptural in many respects, being, upon the whole, inconsistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, and therefore we cannot derive any benefit from such a ministry, and where we derive no spiritual benefit, it can never be required from God that we should communicate of our temporals to support such a ministry.—1 Cor. ix. 9 to 14. In a word, whatever cess or taxation it may be that is required of us by the higher powers, which has for its sole object the support of religion, is a violation of the liberty of the conscience, and is, in effect, the same thing as to command us to render to Cesar the things which belong to God only. Every man in the possession of full liberty of conscience, as all ought to be, should be left to himself to support, from a ready mind, that religion which he most approves of, and which he ought to do according to his ability. In this way the religion of Jesus, independent of civil authority, supports itself in every age, by the influence of his love on the hearts of those that receive the truth, which

which disposes them to give liberally of the things they possess for the support of their poor brethren, and the comfort of those who labour in word and doctrine.

But, though christians, rightly considering their duty, cannot willingly pay such religious taxations, yet they are not to resist those in authority; so that, if they are disposed to take our coat for them, let them have our cloaks also. In a case of this nature we suffer for conscience, and for the truth's sake, in which we are called to exercise patience. And here we may remark, how unreasonable and ungrateful such a conduct is in those who are invested with civil authority. Its unreasonableness appears, when we reflect on the unlimited and uncontrollable authority which it is the sole prerogative of Christ to exercise over the consciences of his people, which plainly supposes the sinfulness of complying with the religious requisitions of earthly princes. It is ungrateful as well as unreasonable, for kings to ensnare the consciences of Christ's subjects with their religious institutions and sentiments, because that he has been careful to enjoin upon all his followers universal subjection to them in those things which relate to civil government. And besides, he has also taught them to pray for every thing that can contribute towards their happiness here or hereafter. Does the king wish for eternal salvation? we will pray for it. Does he desire to live in peace and plenty here? we will put up our supplications for

for it, and cheerfully contribute our part towards it; and if we have it not in our power to add much to his dignity, we will never lift up a hand to disturb his tranquillity, or to oppose his authority. Justice and gratitude do therefore require, that christians possess an unrestrained liberty of conscience, which consists not only in a freedom to worship God according to scripture, but to refuse that which is contrary to it. Which leads us next

To shew that christians are not to honour the king by complying with his appointed fasts; particularly, when a day of fasting is connected with praying for the success of destructive arms: but we may first enquire whether they have any authority from God to appoint fasts for christians upon any occasion whatever. Some christians, from a tenderness and regard for the scripture doctrine of subjection to the higher powers, have admitted this, and affirm, that kings ought to be obeyed in the appointment of national fasts. But in this they break in upon the line of distinction which Jesus has established, which is strikingly simple and clear, namely, that we are to "render unto Cæsar" the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the "things which are God's." Every thing of a civil nature belongs unto Cæsar; but surely we may say with as much freedom, that every thing of a religious kind belongs unto God; therefore, whatever religious duty is required of christians, it ought first to be stamped with his authority, before they ought to comply.

comply. In civil laws there must first be a command from those in authority, before it can be the duty of subjects to obey; and so in matters of religion we must have a precept, example, or something analogous, in the word of God, to bind our consciences to duty. In the New Testament, which is the most perfect and clear light to christians, there is no command that the followers of Christ should obey a fast appointed by kings. Nor do we see any example, where the primitive christians kept any such fasts: and if the doctrine of analogy or inference be pleaded, where is the scripture whence we may conclude that christians bowed the knee to pray when kings commanded them? or what doctrine is there taught in the New Testament which implies such subjection?

The doctrine of abstinence and prayer, as delivered in the New Testament, was enjoined upon purely religious and devout occasions, and therefore we cannot well imagine that Christ intended to allow the kings of the earth the power of regulating such a duty, or to point out to christians the occasions and proper seasons for it*. Christ is the head of the church, and not the king, whose authority over subjects is not derived from

* They fasted when any thing very great was to be done, (Matt. xvii. 21); when they ordained teachers, (Acts xiii. 3); on the occasion of some particular service to God, (See ver. 2); at particular devout seasons, which made it lawful for husband and wife to be apart for the time, (1 Cor. vii. 5); when they were in great trials, (2 Cor. vi. 5), such as Paul was often engaged in, chap. xi. 27.

the consideration of his being a christian, but because civil government is an appointment of God; and the king, on this account, is the minister of God, but not over God's spiritual sanctuary, only over the civil concerns of men.

It is too commonly supposed, that christian kings are to the national churches of those kingdoms over which they reign, what David and Solomon were to the Jewish church. And hence christian kings have been piously termed the Lord's anointed, at the head of the Christian, as David, Solomon, &c. were at the head of the Jewish church.

To me, however, this parallel is improperly drawn, and ought rather to stand thus: What David and Solomon were for a time to the Jewish, the Lord Jesus is to the Christian church in every age. The former were in the capacity of kings, priests, and prophets, over the Old Testament church, and were subject to a change because of their imperfection and mortality. The latter is the same to the New Testament church, but being absolutely perfect, and the immortal, he is not subject to mutability, but remains for ever the head of his church, and a priest after the order of Melchisedeck.—Heb. vii. That David and Solomon were kings and prophets none can doubt, and that they acted occasionally as priests, we may see in 2 Sam. xxiv. 25; 1 Kings iii. 15. On these accounts they were properly termed the Lord's
anointed

anointed (Ex. xxviii. 41; Ps. cv. 15; 1 Sam. xvi. 12); and as such, were the great presidents or leaders of the Jewish church, and had authority to call a solemn assembly, and appoint a national fast to be observed by a national church, which was uniform in itself, and of Jehovah's own appointment, and not men's.

In this church, which was only temporary, abounding with types, prefigurations, and shadows of good things to come (Heb. ix. 9. x. 1), politics, earthly authority, and sacred rites, were united in one mass of religion, by divine permission and appointment, and could not otherwise be in the nature of the thing, it being adapted to an earthly sanctuary (Heb. ix. 1—11), including in it, by the outward token of circumcision, both carnal and spiritual subjects or members. This worship was answerable to the nature of that religion, which an apostle affirms, “stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, or rites and ceremonies, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”—Heb. ix. 9. But what reformation does this apostle allude to? Was it to a reformed national church, wearing the christian name, yet retaining the things in use under the old covenant, as altars, organs, bells, vestments, unctions, holy waters, and consecrated grounds, &c.? Did he cast his eyes towards a church adorned with an earthly monarch at its head, surrounded with lordly priests, exacting with rigour, as of old, their tythes? Or did he behold, at some little distance, a system of religion,

H

entitled

entitled the christian, yet, as of old, adapting itself to suit a kingdom of unregenerate and untaught disciples, except what should lie in the sprinkling or pouring of water on their faces in the name of Jesus? If so, we have indeed enjoyed this time of reformation, but shall be scarcely able to see wherein the difference consists between the unreformed Jewish and the reformed Christian church. But, brethren, we have not so learned of Christ, if we have been taught of him the truth as it is in Jesus. We shall then be able to see, that Jesus is now the only king of Zion, and the anointed of the Lord * ; that David and Solomon were types of him ; and that their anointing prefigured and pointed out that divine unction from above, with which Jesus was endowed without measure, even the Holy Spirit, to qualify him for the important offices of prophet, priest, and king, over his church, to which he was appointed of the Father ; consequently we must then see, that we can have no further need of earthly princes to govern the church, since Christ, the true anointed and King of kings, is come. All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him—Matt. xxviii. 18. He cannot therefore admit of any rival authority in ordering the affairs of his church, which is purely spiritual, and unconnected with any thing worldly, as he himself declares : “ My kingdom is not of this world ”—John xviii. 36. He has ample authority and unquestionable right to

* See Psalm ii. 2 and 6, compared with Acts iv. 25, 26, 27.

exercise this extensive power; for "he was before all things, and by him all things consist;" "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily." Col. i. 17.—ii. 9. He possesses in himself wisdom, also, sufficient to direct his great power to infinitely good purposes, and adequate to the important office of governing the church in every age, till time shall be no more; for "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." His almighty power, then, and unfathomable wisdom, thus connected, shall, in the end, make all things, both in heaven and in earth, redound to his own glory and the good of his people, who are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power (Col. ii. 3, 10; ch. i. 18); the head of the body, the church.

How vain, then, are the attempts of earthly monarchs, when they exert the feeble arm of civil authority to promote the interests of an invisible, spiritual, and heavenly kingdom, which can only be supported by the omnipotent hand of God! How unjust their claims, and incompetent their wisdom, to be head over his church, and to share any part of the government over her, in appointing her fasts, her solemn prayers, and the bounds of her religious liberty!

Yes, brethren, we have seen the assuming hand of civil authority exalting itself, in conjunction with a supposed ecclesiastical power, to set aside the laws of

Christ, and make them give place to their own institutions. But our friendship to Jesus is known only by our attachment to his laws, and which stand opposed to the friendship of this world: "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."—John xv. 14.

In religious matters we cannot serve two masters; we must hold the authority of Christ over our consciences by his word, independent of any earthly prince or power whatever, that, as did the Thessalonians, when we receive the word of God, in the scriptures, we may receive it, not as the word of men, nor under the fear and authority of the civil magistrates, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in those that believe.—1 Thes. ii. 13.

We presume, therefore, that the civil powers have no right even to enforce genuine christianity, were they so disposed; for, according to this doctrine, it would then be our duty not only to obey God, but also the king, in matters of religion. It would then be our duty to receive the gospel as the word of men as well as the word of God, whose fear would be taught, partly by the precepts of men; which thing the Lord hates.—Isa. xxix. 13.

Conversion to real christianity would thus consist, not solely in the exertion of almighty and spiritual energy in the belief of the gospel, but partly by the power of carnal weapons in the hand of earthly authority,

authority, obliging the sinner to give credit to the word of God. Being thus compelled to come in, according to the literal meaning of that phrase, the church of God would be filled with men, under the controul of a carnal mind, answerable to the weapons with which they were regenerated.

If, then, the civil powers have no right to enforce genuine christianity by any other means than that which it is the duty of the meanest subject to make use of, that is, fair and scriptural arguments, prayer, and a good life, surely they can have no authority for appointing and enforcing that which is directly contrary to it; I mean a fast, to pray for the success of destructive arms, and often under the name of religion. A doctrine this altogether repugnant to the New Testament dispensation, and inimical to that time of reformation, which Paul has in view in his letter to the Hebrew church, which stood in perfect contrast with the Jewish and unreformed state of the church. The prayers of the first christians were never directed or put up to God for such an end. It was rather that the time should be accomplished when men should learn war no more; when they should beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and when nation should not lift up sword against nation.—Isa. ii. 4. The consequence of which happy period will be, as in Micah iv. 4. “They
“shall sit every man under his vine and under his

“fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the
“mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*.”

The

* These prophecies will apply to the commencement of the kingdom of Christ, which time is in scripture sometimes termed the last days or times.—2 Pet. iii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 1. The duration or length of these last days, perhaps, takes in the whole space between the down pouring of the Holy Spirit, as in Acts ii. 17. and Joel ii, and the second coming of Christ; or at least to his coming in spirit and great power, when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, to the conversion of a remarkable body of the Jews (Rom. xi. 25, 26); in the latter part of which period, we are inclined to believe, though not pretending to much skill in these matters, that Isaiah's and Micah's prophecies will be literally fulfilled. We presume to say, every prophecy of the Old Testament has, or will have, a strictly literal accomplishment, whatever other figurative or spiritual meaning may be included in it, otherwise we think they would be vague, and capable of being twisted to any private purpose, and their certain accomplishment not easily discerned. Upon this principle we judge, that as the state of the christian church was never yet so as to render its members void of all fear from the civil authority in every nation, a time is coming, when antichrist having had his visible overthrow in the nations, or as the prophecy expresses it, when the Lord shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off, which we think he is now doing; then they shall beat their swords into plough shares, &c. and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war any more; and in comparison to what has been, the earth shall then be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.—Habak. ii. 14. Isa. xi. 9. In this time, also, “the Lord shall set his hand again the second time
“to recover the remnant of his people. He shall set up an ensign
“for the nations, and assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.
“The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah
“shall

The nation of the Jews were permitted, under the Mosaic religion, it being adapted to worldly power and

“shall be cut off,” &c.—See Habak. ii. 11, 12, 13. Ezek. xxxvi. 23, 24. chap. xxxviii. 8. and the whole of the succeeding chapter. In this day Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones, figurative of the dispersed, rejected, and the spiritually dead state of the Jews, will stand up an exceeding great army, being raised by the power of God from the grave of their trespasses and sin. These will not be an army of man’s appointment, to destroy with carnal weapons; they will be an army for God, equipped with the armour of righteousness. The Lord will fight their battles for them, and place them in their own land.—Ezek. xxxvii. 1—15. This time, we are inclined to think, will agree with the state of the Philadelphian church described in the Revelations, when, answerable to its name, brotherly love will spread, and, in its ancient simplicity and power, will appear conspicuous amongst the Jews and Gentiles as one body in Christ. The glory of this period is so great that many christians cannot admit of the truth of it, as they know not how to account for it, or reconcile it with the idea of the suffering state of Christ’s true church in this world, or of its being described as a little flock. It was difficult for the Jews to account for the wonderful call of the Gentiles, after they had been so long in a state of alienation from God; and how astonishing to the disciples of Christ, for years only twelve in number, to hear of three thousand converted in a day! In some of the persecuted states of christians under Rome papal, when God’s witnesses lay as dead in the streets of the great city, and when scarcely a saint was to be seen or known by a scriptural profession of the faith, our present privileges, and the wonderful revolution that commenced by the reformation of Wickliff, Luther, and Calvin, if described to such, must have appeared as unaccountable and inconsistent with their suffering and afflictive condition. I do not figure out to myself scarcely a greater difference between the present, and that glorious and happy period to come, which has been now hinted at, than was between those times; for as now, there will then be the enemies of Christ, possessing, though not the power, yet the spirit

and to the fleshly seed of Abraham, to go forth with destructive weapons against their enemies, for the purpose of defending the worship of the true God against the incursions of idolatry.

In the wilderness, during their journey to the pro-
of persecution and enmity against God's people. The visible power of antichrist by its civil authority will then be totally consumed, by the brightness of the Lord's coming in those days, but the secret spirit of him will, I presume, still exist in the bosom of false professors, of which the christian churches will not then be totally cleared of. The spirit of antichrist wrought in the apostles' days, before it came to a head; and for the same cause it may operate in the times after this head is cut off. The christians then, as now, will have an evil heart of unbelief to grapple with: they will have sin to conquer, and enough to make them desire to be unclothed with mortality, that they may be clothed upon with their house from heaven. And with respect to their great numbers, who can object to it, if it be the mind of God to call them in one hope of their calling? Christianity may reign in myriads in the same degree of perfection as in one individual. And though in general the church has appeared but a little flock, comparatively, in every age hitherto, yet there may be an exception in this period. Why not admit that the church, though appearing as yet only a growing bud, may not then come forth under the benign influence of the Sun of Righteousness, as a full blown rose, disseminating a fragrance, which till then has never yet been seen or experienced? And will it not be as surprising to the beholding christian eye, to see this rose again contracting its once divinely expanded leaves into a withered form, and by abounding iniquity lose its former fragrance, until it dwindles into nothing? so that when the Son of Man shall come, the world will resemble in wickedness the days of Noah—Matt. xxiv. 37, 38. These, my brethren, pardoning this long note, are the great things that I conceive we should look for, that we may be prepared for their coming.

mised

mised land of rest, they were ordered of God occasionally to fight their way through the obstructing adversaries, that they might obtain the promise made unto their fathers. But these wars are no precedents to christians; for in the shadowy dispensation of the Jews, they only prefigured the spiritual contests of christians against sin and satan, in order to their obtaining the spiritual and eternal blessings of the heavenly Canaan above. Hence an apostle contrasts the christian weapons with those used by the Jews: “For
 “though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after
 “the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not
 “carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling
 “down the strong holds, casting down imaginations,
 “and every high thing that exalteth itself against the
 “knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity
 “every thought to the obedience of Christ.—2 Cor.
 x. 3, 4, 5.

These weapons are particularly described in Eph. chap. vi.; and are only to be used in the kingdom of God, which consists not in any thing sensual, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.
 —Rom. xiv. 17.

Opposed to this kingdom are all those who delight in war, whose origin is in the lust and carnality of men, according to apostolic decision.—James iv. 1, 2. And how applicable are his words in the 3d verse, to those christians who scruple not to join with those who
 appoint

appoint a day of supplications to God, in behalf of carnal and destructive weapons: "Ye ask and receive
" not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it
" upon your lust."

The fast of the Ninevites is, however, considered by some as an irrefragable proof, that christians ought to obey a national fast by the king's appointment.

Their argument is this: "If God acknowledged a fast appointed by a heathen prince, surely we ought to obey the appointed fast of a christian king." But surely it is neither warrantable nor safe to determine the christian conduct by the dim light of the Old, whilst we enjoy the superior and meridian light of the New Testament, especially when the instance adverted to in the former, would involve a contradiction to the doctrines contained in the latter. This ancient fast, however, and those in modern times, are very dissimilar both in their end, circumstances, and effects. The fast of the Ninevites was not for the success of carnal weapons, but for the purpose of averting impending and certain judgments for their sins.—Second, The certain and immediate overthrow of that city was denounced by the Lord's prophet.—Third, The king did not appoint the fast in particular, but the people believed God, it is said, in consequence of which it was they who first proclaimed the fast; and the king, being under the same condemnation

tion

tion with the meanest of his subjects, gave his sanction to it.—Jonah iii. 5.

But does God now threaten to punish in this manner? If he does, surely all christians under such circumstances would both fast and pray, believing in God, whether it were regarded or not by the king. Surely it would have been justifiable in the Ninevites to have acted as they did, supposing the king had not believed the prophet. The civil powers can neither heighten nor diminish our obligations to obey God. It is well if they encourage men to do it, and we ought to be thankful for it: but their encouragement makes no difference as to the duty we owe to God. The keeping of the Lord's day is sanctioned by our government, for which we ought to bless God, and acknowledge it in our rulers: yet christians meet on that day independent of this, and could not be restrained from it, were the civil authority to object to it, because they know it is the appointment of God. We therefore think that prayer and fasting, as solemn christian duties, for the same reason, stand unconnected with our obedience to civil government; and that the seasons for these holy exercises can only be regulated by a real christian church under the directions of Christ the only head. Nor do we think that a christian church ought to refuse fasting and prayer, at a time that a nation is engaged in it merely on that account, if there are scriptural grounds for it; as in case of a plague, famine, or any other general and threatening calamity, which must at once

strike a uniform conviction upon every christian's mind of the necessity of such a duty.

We, however, meet with no fast of this nature in the New Testament. We hear of a general dearth which affected the christians in Judea, but no fast appointed on the occasion. All the fasts mentioned are either of a private, or have a relation to church matters. And, indeed, had there been any example of a political fast in the New Testament, it must have lead to political discussion and disputes among christians, a practice this altogether foreign to the nature of Christ's religion.

But further, it hath also been pleaded by some christians, that considering the king, or those in authority, as God's minister, who are by the apostle (Rom. xiii. iv.) said not to bear the sword in vain, that it implies the lawfulness of christians praying that the arms of a nation may have effect upon a common enemy : but surely the apostle did not mean that the christians at Rome should pray for the extension of the Roman conquests ! His ideas were not much enlarged in this way. He certainly, rather than war and bloodshed, means to exhort christians that they should be good and peaceable subjects in all civil matters, and that if they refused subjection to those in authority, they, as well as other men, ought to suffer under the sword of justice ; otherwise, it would be in effect like bearing the sword in vain. The apostle had declared

clared himself at all times ready to die, if any thing worthy of it could, by those in authority, be found in his civil conduct. He was not of the mind of some professed christians in after ages, who disgraced that holy name wherewith they were called, by imagining themselves delivered from the bonds of civil authority when they were made Christ's free servants. —No. He willingly subjected himself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. We therefore think, that by bearing not the sword in vain, the apostle means, that by it those in authority should maintain peace and good order at home. Upon this principle christians may admit the propriety of maintaining a standing army for the purpose of giving energy to law, quelling intestine broils and factions, and maintaining peace. Nor do we at present see it inconsistent in some cases, that christians should defend themselves against the violence of an enemy. It is true our Lord says, resist not evil; and if any smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other. This is to be literally complied with when the evil comes upon us merely on the account of religion, or when we are smitten for the worthy name of Christ. But I do not see any evil in lifting up my hand to ward off a blow aimed at my head by a villain, who has nothing in view but to deprive me of life and obtain money. Not resisting evil has a particular reference to the old law of retaliation, which warranted the injured to return evil for evil, in an equal degree: but pure self-defence against violence offered to our body, and against unjust aspersions of our moral character, cannot

not well be construed into acts of retaliation, which the christian by all means is to avoid. Supposing a number of christians, along with other men, besieged by a common enemy, whose aim was plunder and despoil, would it not be the duty of the christians to assist their fellow subjects in repelling such a banditti? If this be not admitted, it unavoidably follows, that a christian, in such circumstances, ought tamely to give up his own, and the life of his nearest relatives, with every other thing most dear, into the hands of monsters in human shape, because that he will not resist evil! Surely our Lord never taught such a doctrine? No: on the contrary, he says, "if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."—Matt. xxiv. 43. In fine, if we are not allowed pure self-defence in civil matters, neither locks nor laws could be of any use to christians. If we think it any privilege to be protected, and if we approve of the conduct of those who protect us in our liberties, surely what we approve in others we may do ourselves, if necessary, though it should be a disagreeable service.

Fourth. To shew, that to dispute about and meddle with matters of politics is not consistent with the genius and spirit of christianity; concluding with a few remarks from the whole.

By disputing about politics, I call that strictly criminal which extends to open contention and cavel-
ling,

ling, which has little tendency but to alienate the affections of men from those in authority, and to divide subjects into private parties and factions. This, to me, is unworthy of a good subject, but intolerant in a christian.

By meddling with matters of politics we mean, the exercise of an anxious mind labouring to investigate politics, and to decide upon which and what is the best mode of governing. Some degree of this may be laudable in such as have influence and power to effect any thing in a lawful way for the good of mankind. But as real christians have in general no sort of influence or office in states to make these inquiries any part of their duty, it would be sinful.

We have no example, either in the conduct of our Lord or his apostles, for any thing of this sort, although there were sufficient occasions for it, had they been so disposed. The question put to Jesus, whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar? was a sufficient opportunity for him to have shewn when it was, and when it was not lawful, if he had maintained any such distinction. But, on the contrary, we see he positively commands us to pay tribute to Cæsar, but gives us no directions for investigating the lawfulness of his government, or whether it were consistent with the rights of man. Nor did Jesus in this conduct court the applause or seek the protection of the Roman government for himself and followers.—No: he has taught his disciples in every age to seek not shelter from princes at the expence of truth; but
ever

ever to remember to render unto God the things that are God's, as well as to Cæsar the things that are his. The inspired servant of Christ, and magnanimous apostle of the gentiles, who in all his conduct appears to have despised the fear of man when put in competition with the fear of God, does not scruple to enjoin obedience to a cruel and despotic prince, under whose power some christians at Rome suffered death, for a crime, of which not they, but their prince himself was guilty *. It is probable that this piece of cruelty took place before the apostle had written his epistle to the Romans ; if so, it makes his doctrine of christian subjection to the powers that be still more striking, and frees it from all possible objection, when it is considered in how unlimited a manner he enjoins obedience to such a wicked governor. Besides, we must necessarily infer, that if the apostle had thought it the duty of christians to investigate the nature of civil government, in order to decide upon the lawful and best modes of it before they could render due subjection, here was a fair opportunity and an occasion for it. It is very natural to suppose that the christians at Rome had made some inquiries of the apostle concerning this matter, to which the beginning of the thirteenth chapter in his epistle to this church is a direct answer : namely, that every soul should be subject to the powers that be, as we have already seen.

* Nero, who hated the christians, in a wanton fit, ordered his guards to set a part of Rome on fire, and afterwards charged it upon the christians, for which several of them were put to death.

It is generally allowed, that this church was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. If so, it would be no wonder in those days to hear a Jewish convert question whether it were lawful to submit to a government maintaining the worship of idols! Nor would it be surprising to hear a Gentile convert query whether they were to esteem that government to be of God, which loaded christians with reproach, harassed them with persecution, and put others to death for crimes of which they were not guilty. It was natural to the Gentile and to the Jew to resist the injuries done; but notwithstanding these considerations, both are required to submit upon one and the same principle, even for conscience sake. They were taught to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, and to be no brawlers; no contenders or disputants, the word means, which surely is here applicable to politics.—

Titus iii. 2.

But further, we may prove, from the nature of Christ's kingdom, and the general laws enjoined upon all its subjects, that to meddle with politics is highly inconsistent with it. He has plainly told us that his kingdom is not of this world (John xviii.); governed neither by its laws nor maxims. Therefore, as Christ does not wish the kings of the earth to rule in any measure for him, so neither does he require his subjects to interfere with the dominions or governments of the princes of this world. The services of christians, as busy-bodies in politics, will prove as unacceptable to the Lord Jesus, as that of earthly mo-

narchs when they set up for defenders of his faith by the force of carnal weapons. Both parties are equally out of their proper sphere, and act equally inconsistent with their own principles. The religion of the Son of God, which is pure and spiritual, will not mix with politics, which at best are but of an earthly nature, imperfect, and transitory. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he made no attempt to alter civil governments, or to mould them into a religious form, as many professed christians have since wished governments to be. His aim was to establish a kingdom of his own, perfectly different from all other kingdoms, whose laws are all heavenly and divine, absolutely perfect, and in their duration eternal. Hence has arisen an everlasting dominion, and a kingdom that shall never be destroyed.—Dan. vii. 14.

CONCLUSION.

FROM the whole then of what has been said, let us be exhorted to be at peace with all men, and quiet under whatsoever government we are placed by the unerring hand of Providence. We are called upon to have our conversation in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour. In the passage here alluded to, the apostle reproves some professing christians, who in their conduct appeared to be enemies of Christ, who gloried in their shame, and minded earthly things; who probably contended more for their rights as citizens here, than for their privileges as christians belonging to a city above, whose maker and builder is God.—Phil. iii. 18, 19, 20.

Let

Let us remember therefore, that it is in heaven where our interest chiefly is. There is our citizenship; and in the view of possessing it shortly will the main of our conversation be directed. We are called upon to set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; and our Lord lays it down as a maxim, that if we are laying up treasures above, our hearts will be there also; in the same way as they who heap up treasures here have their hearts on earth. If then heaven be our chief banking house, our conversation will be much taken up about the security of our property there, and we shall find, to our comfort, that if once laid up in the sacred mansions above, they will remain inviolable from thieves and unhurt by the moth.

We are pilgrims in this world, as all our forefathers were, and we, like them, seek a country above. It does not suit well with the idea of a pilgrim, when passing through a strange country, to retard his journey by stopping to dispute and settle the manners and laws of a country, to which he means not to return. But how inadequate are christians for such a task ! It is no easy matter to attain such a knowledge of politics, as will warrant us to say what is the best mode of ruling mankind. In the pursuit of such an inquiry the whole of a christian's life might be spent ere he could know how to decide for the best ; and perhaps, after all, be left in total perplexity about it. We ought rather to admire the more excellent way

I 2 which

which Jesus has taught us, which leaves no room for doubt, by making it our positive duty to obey every kind of government, without exceptions to the characters of those who rule. Here perplexity is at an end, and we are led to admire the wisdom of Christ in establishing a rule of obedience, so suitable to christians in every age, and in every country where they may dwell on the earth: so that we may conceive of christians in various nations, all harmoniously sending up their petitions to God for their kings and governors, and for the good of their respective countries, though the governments of each may be totally different to each other. This way not only suits the age and the country we live in, but also the meanest of capacities in the christian profession. The wayfaring man, though a fool as to politics, need not err in it: for surely any of us can understand, when it is affirmed that there are no powers but what are of God, and that every soul must be subject to them; while, on the other hand, the wisest could scarcely affirm with a safe conscience what is the best mode of government.

We ought also to know that the end of government is for the good of mankind; and though we may not always be blest with what we may conceive to be the best form of it, yet we are sure, that without some kind of government we could not long exist in the world. The worst of governments are better than none; and there are none so bad but what are pro-

ductive of some real benefit to those who live under them. Let us beware of a spirit that would lead us to rebel against the higher powers on earth: the same spirit would in the end lead us to fight against the armies of heaven, and defy the Almighty. The angels that first sinned, did not like to be in subjection to the higher powers of heaven. The idea of being governed did not suit these ambitious spirits. They desired to govern themselves, therefore God cast them down to hell, and delivered them unto chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment.—2 Peter ii. 4.

From this dreadful source of ambition and rebellion we see a stream of it running through every age, and infecting every condition and relation of men. By the influence of this spirit Korah and his company rebelled against the government of Moses; and at length the children of Israel, through its baneful influence, did not like God to reign over them. As children, how naturally are we averse to submit to the government of parents! Their kindly restraints upon us are considered as intolerable yokes of bondage: yes, in every relation of life where subjection is enjoined, the natural emotions of our wicked hearts rise up against it.

As men and christians, we indeed cannot but think of the difference between the good and evil existing in courts. We ought neither to be rebels nor parasites. Therefore we cannot approve of the evil because committed

committed by those in authority; yet it is no part of our duty to reprove such, much less to attempt to reform by violence. Kings and magistrates must be accountable for their own immoral conduct to him who is higher than the highest, and who will reward the iniquity of princes by the same scales of impartial justice, as those by which the peasant and the beggar are weighed.—And

Whilst others are actively engaged in finding out the corruptions of government, let it be our serious business to find out the secret and hidden springs of corruptions yet remaining in ourselves, that we may be more competent judges of the faults of others. And in the midst of heavy complaints about taxations, let us be thankful that we have wherewith to pay them.

Let us reflect with grateful acknowledgments to God for the invaluable privileges of the present time, under the present government, by which we are protected in our religious liberties to a considerable degree, though not to all the length that might be expected and wished for; yet, in comparison with former times and to other modern nations, we shall find our obligation to honour the king greatly enhanced.

THE END.